Insurance firm sues Art Man garbage truck driver, others. PAGE 2
Multinational allies, partners conduct Elephant Walk during Cope North 24. PAGE 6

Hafa Adai!

$1 Saipan Tribune

THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

Volume XXXIV, Issue No. 28

www.saipantribune.com | THURSDAY FEBRUARY 8, 2024 | www.facebook.com/saipantribune

Yes, Propst will!

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

With this wife, Daisy, and children by his side, House of Representatives floor leader Edwin K. Propst (D-Saipan) announced Tuesday night his intent to run as the CNMI's delegate in the U.S. Congress under the NMI

See YES on Page 4

FERDIE DE LA TORRE

With his family by his side, Rep. Edwin K. Propst (D-Saipan) announces his intent to run under the NMI Democratic Party as the CNMI's delegate to the U.S. Congress in the Nov. 5, 2024 election. Propst made the announcement at his late parents' home in Susupe Tuesday night.

5th in scheme to transport illegal aliens to Guam ID'd

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The U.S. government has named another culprit who has since pleaded guilty to conspiring with four others to transport illegal aliens from Saipan to Guam.

The United States filed information yesterday charging Tang Yong Bing for conspiracy to transport illegal aliens to Guam.

According to the information, Tang essentially conspired with Yan Juan Hu Taitano, Lee Jesse Omar Reyes, Ramon Jose Quitano Sablan, and Maverick Ryan Iguel Marlik to carry out the

See FIFTH on Page 4

DPS on the hunt for Edward Castro

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Department of Public Safety is seeking the community's help in locating Edward Castro, who is believed to be involved in a burglary and theft incident where about $126,000 worth of personal property were stolen.

Castro

The Department of Public Safety issued a statement yesterday seeking the community's assistance in locating Castro, who is allegedly involved in a burglary and theft incident

See DPS on Page 4

Largest turnout for Co-op Job Fair

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

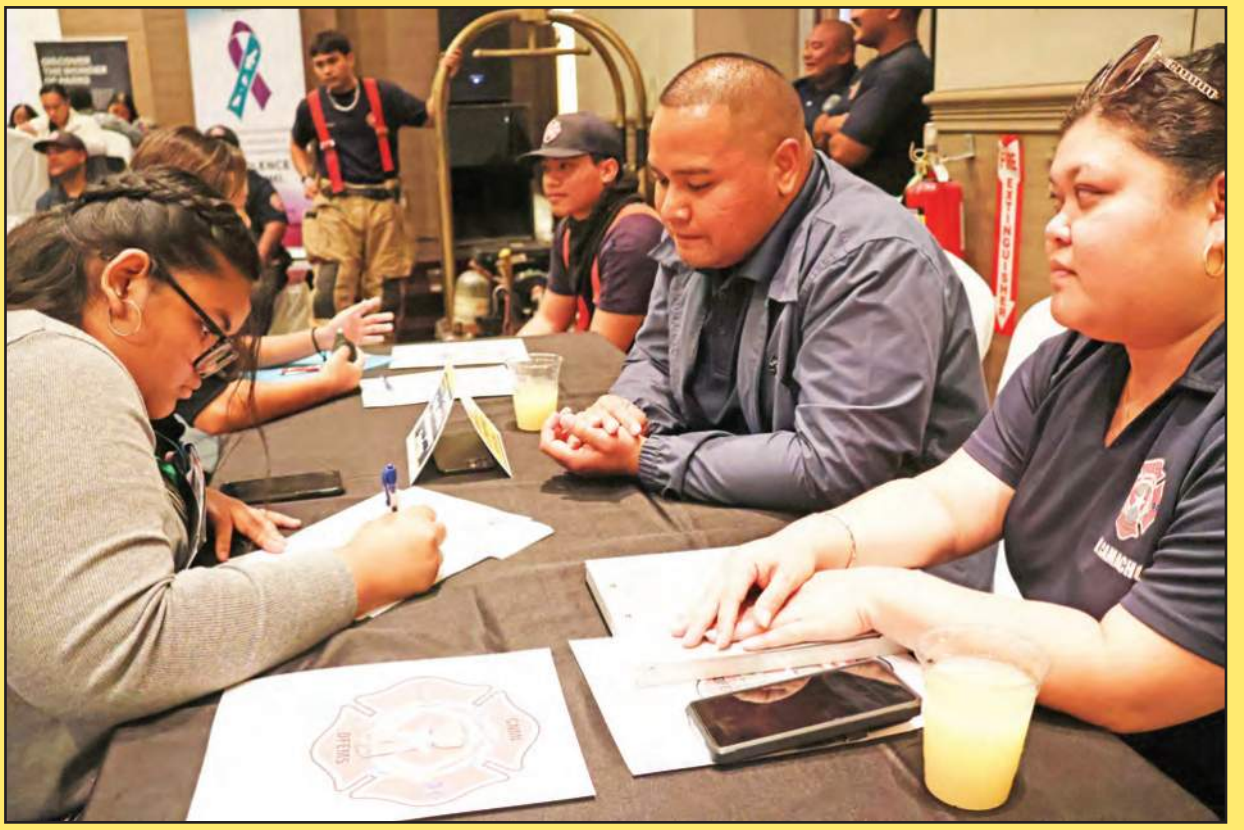
The Spring '24 Co-Op Job Fair last Tuesday at the Taga Ballroom of the Saipan World Resort drew the largest turnout of students and companies, according to the event's organizers.

About 130 students from public and private high schools, which included Marianas High School, Saipan Southern High School, Kagman High School, Da'ok

See LARGEST on Page 4

LEIGH GASES

Students fill up paperwork at the Department of Fire and Emergency Medical Services booth during the Spring '24 Co-Op Job Fair last Tuesday at the Taga Ballroom of the Saipan World Resort.



INSIDE

LOCAL
The USCGC *Oliver Henry* delivers supplies and equipment to the drought-affected islands of FSM.
PAGE 7

NATION
House Republicans failed to impeach Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas.
PAGE 12

LIFE & STYLE
Toby Keith, a hit country crafter of pro-American anthems, has died. He was 62.
PAGE 15

GOT A NEWS TIP? TEL: 235-6397 / 235-2440 FAX: 235-3740 EMAIL: editor@saipantribune.com

SCAN ME WITH A COMPATIBLE QR READER TO KEEP UPDATED ON ALL THE LATEST NEWS.

Local

Insurance firm sues Art Man garbage truck driver, others

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Art Man garbage truck driver who was previously acquitted of homicide charges for a fatal car accident in February 2021 is set to appear in Superior Court again, this time in response to a civil lawsuit filed by Calvo's Select Care Insurance Inc., which shelled out over $57,000 following the fatal incident.

Calvo's Insurance, through attorney David Banes, has filed a civil lawsuit against Art Man garbage truck driver Eduardo Fabia, Art Man Corp., and Art Man's insurance carrier, DB Insurance Co. Ltd., alleging equitable indemnification and unjust enrichment.

Calvo's Insurance is asking for an undetermined amount of money judgment to be proven at trial.

In its complaint, Art Man brought up the Feb. 1, 2021, incident where Art Man's garbage truck that Fabia was driving, collided with a pickup truck belonging to Quin Manglona across the Marina Heights Business building intersection in Puerto Rico.

Aside from Manglona, the pickup truck also had two passengers on its bed, Rommel Irang and Miah Raju, who were employees of Manglona.

At the time of the incident, Calvo said the pickup truck was making a left turn to go to the Smiling Cove Marina while Fabia was traveling southbound. The complaint alleges that the traffic light for southbound traffic was red while the traffic light for making a left turn was green.

"The garbage truck was supposed to stop at the intersection; however, instead of stopping, Fabia ran the red light…," the complaint said.

As a result, the garbage truck collided with the pickup, severely damaging the pickup and the truck was deemed a total loss.

In addition, because of the collision, Irang and Raju were thrown off the pickup truck, with Irang leaving the scene injured but alive, while Raju sustained injuries that eventually resulted in his death.

"The pickup truck was insured by Calvo's pursuant to an automobile insurance policy issued to Manglona. Irang and Raju were covered under a workers' compensation insurance policy provided by Calvo's to Manglona. Upon information and belief, the garbage truck was insured by DB Insurance pursuant to an automobile insurance policy provided by DB through Moylan Insurance Underwriters Inc. Claims for property damage to the pickup truck and for workers' compensation for Irang and Raju were made to Calvo's. Calvo's paid those claims under the respective insurance policies, including $23,400 for the property damage to the pickup truck, $6,540 as workers' compensation for Irang, and $27,219.64 as workers' compensation for Raju, for a total of $57,159.64," the lawsuit states.

Calvo argues that Fabia was at fault during the accident so is liable for the damage to the pickup truck and for the injuries Irang and Raju sustained.

Calvo adds that, as Fabia's employer, Art Man was vicariously liable and since the garbage truck was insured by DB, DB was liable to pay Fabia's liabilities for the damage to the pickup truck and for the bodily injuries to Irang and Raju.

"Neither Calvo's nor any of its insured were at fault for the accident. It is inequitable for them to shoulder the loss caused by Fabia acting within the scope of his employment with Art Man and covered by DB. Calvo's is entitled to equitable indemnification from DB, Fabia, and Art Man. It is unequitable and unjust to allow Fabia, Art Man, and DB to retain the benefits conferred by Calvo's without compensating Calvo's," the lawsuit said.

Back in May 2022, a jury acquitted Fabia of the charges filed against him that included homicide by vehicle and failure to obey a traffic signal.

During his trial, although photos taken following the crash showed the southbound traffic light was red, the prosecution could not prove beyond a reasonable doubt that the light was red when Fabia ran through it.

In addition, although there was surveillance footage acquired from the nearby MHI and MHII buildings, the defense argued during the trial that there were objects obstructing the view of the traffic lights, so it was unclear whether Fabia ran a red light.

Also, some inconsistencies brought to light during trial in the testimonies given by witnesses ultimately stirred reasonable doubt for the jurors.

In this screengrab from a YouTube video, Saipan and Northern Islands Legislative Delegation chair Rep. John Paul P. Sablan (Ind-Saipan) presides over a session in the House of Representatives chamber yesterday. One of the actions taken by SNILD was to confirm the appointment of Stephen P. Sablan and Charlotte P. R. Cepeda to serve as members of the Commonwealth Zoning Board.

Sablan and Cepeda confirmed to serve as Zoning Board members

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Saipan and Northern Islands Legislative Delegation confirmed yesterday the appointment of Stephen P. Sablan and Charlotte P. R. Cepeda to serve as members of the Commonwealth Zoning Board.

All 19 SNILD members present at a session voted "yes" to a motion to adopt the SNILD Judiciary & Government Operations Committee's report that recommends the confirmation of the appointment of Sablan and Cepeda.

Senate President Edith E. DeLeon Guerrero (D-Saipan) chairs the SNILD JGO Committee.

During the public comments portion of the session, Oscar M. Babauta, who is the special assistant for the Palacios-Apatang administration, thanked DeLeon Guerrero for conducting a swift confirmation hearing for Sablan and Cepeda.

Babauta noted that in the transition report, there are findings and recommendations that need to be resolved so the people can once again take a deep breath primarily towards the business sector.

"We need a rapid turnaround of services arising out of this office," said Babauta, referring to the Zoning Board.

He underscored the importance of having Sablan and Cepeda as new board members to seriously look and review Zoning policies so once and for all the people in the community can see some changes in the environment of the Zoning office itself and thus having to have expedient services.

Babauta said the administration expressed gratitude for Sablan and Cepeda for accepting the call and request of Gov. Arnold I. Palacios and Lt. Gov. David M. Apatang to serve the people.

Contests galore at 20th Tinian Hot Pepper Festival

MVA
Ricardo Carrazco of USA chomps his way through 100 "donne sali" peppers in February 2021 to win first place in the Hot Pepper Eating Contest. The 20th Annual Tinian Hot Pepper Festival will be held on Feb. 16-17, 2024.

A full repertoire of contests awaits revelers at the 20th Annual Tinian Hot Pepper Festival on Feb. 16-17, 2024, in the Marianas.

Coed beach volleyball kicks off Feb. 15 at 2:30pm along the sandy shoreline of Jones Beach in San Jose village, with teams of six people—including at least one female—vying for cash prizes of $250 for first place, $200 for second place, and $150 for third. Games will end before dark and resume at 10am on Saturday.

The festival opening ceremony will be held at 5pm with Lt. Gov. David Apatang and other dignitaries. The ceremony will also include a historic sister-city agreement signing by the mayors of Tinian and the town of Tubla in the province of Banguet in the Philippines.

The first round of the Triple J Hot Pepper Eating Contest will be held at 6:30pm on Friday, pitting 10 competitors against each other. Round 2 of the eating contest will be held on Saturday at 5pm. Contestants may join either round to prove their mettle. Tinian Donni Sali Band and other live entertainment will take the stage from 7pm to 11pm.

Contests on Saturday start bright and early with the Pika Run 2024 at 6am at Jones Beach. Registration is $10 for the 5K and can be made on race day from 5am to 5:30am at the start line. Cash prizes will be awarded in the Men and Women's Divisions: $150 for first place, $100 for second place, and $75 for third place. The first 100 registrants will also receive a complimentary Pika Run 2024 T-shirt, and awards will be presented at 4pm. Registration can be made by emailing your name, division, and contact phone number to the MVA office on Saipan at communityprojects@mymarianas.com or calling (670) 664-3200 or by emailing the MVA Tinian office at vborja@mymarianas.com (use subject line: Pika Run).

The Estofao Pika (spicy chicken stew) Cooking Contest will begin at 4pm. Following Round 2 of the Hot Pepper Eating Contest at 5pm, the Little Miss & Mr. Pika 2024 will be held at 5:30pm for ages 6-11. Contestants will be judged on costume, Q&A, and overall stage presence. The JC Burger Eating Contest at 6:30pm will deliver for contestants who like their burgers spicy. Local musician Yobei Parker will set the stage for the Cha-cha Dance Contest between 7pm and 8pm, where contestants will be judged based on their hot pepper-inspired costumes and their dance moves. Other live entertainment on Saturday will include YORP Band at 8pm, Sugar King Band at 9pm, and True North at 10pm.

"We're excited to have a full deck of contests lined up for the Tinian Hot Pepper Festival," said Marianas Visitors Authority managing director Christopher A. Concepcion. "In addition, we'll be opening registration early for most of the contests, so stay tuned for that announcement and get ready for a great weekend [on] Tinian."

DOCOMO Pacific is the Exclusive Pika Sponsor of the 20th Annual Tinian Hot Pepper Festival, which is organized by the MVA in collaboration with the Tinian Mayor's Office. Additional sponsors are JC Café and Triple J.

The festival pays homage at Tinian's "donne sali" hot pepper and will be held at the Fiesta Grounds in San Jose, Tinian, adjacent to the picturesque Jones Beach and House of Taga, a U.S. National Historic Landmark featuring limestone monoliths carved by ancient Chamorros.

Ferry service is available between Saipan and Tinian for the event. Departure time has been changed to 1pm on the return trip from Tinian to Saipan on all days.

- Feb. 16, departing Saipan at 8am and departing Tinian at 1pm
- Feb. 17, departing Saipan at 8am and departing Tinian at 1pm
- Feb. 18, departing Saipan at 8am and departing Tinian at 1pm

Ferry round trip cost is $20 for ages 3-11, $50 for ages 12 and older. For one way, the cost is $15 for ages 3-11, $25 for ages 12 and older. Children ages 0-2 are free. Children under age 18 must be accompanied by an adult, and tickets are non-transferable. Advanced ticket purchase is required and will be accommodated on a first come, first served basis. Tickets may be purchased at the MVA Office on Tinian or Saipan; cash payments only will be accepted. Interested parties may call (670) 664-3200 to confirm availability before purchase.

Free camping is available at Jones Beach, Taga Beach (toilets, barbecue pits, and outdoor showers available) and at the adjacent Tachogna Beach (barbecue pits, outdoor showers, and toilets are available).

The *Super Emerald* ferry will depart from the Commonwealth Ports Authority dock in Lower Base, Saipan. Passengers must check in one hour before departure. Each paying customer is allowed one free checked bag and one additional checked bag for $20 for a combined total weight of up to 70 lbs. One household pet of up to 50 lbs is allowed per paying customer, and 35 passengers will be accommodated per ferry.

For more information, contact MVA Community Projects specialist Ray Villagomez at rvillagomez@mymarianas.com, Tinian field operations supervisor Vida Borja at vborja@mymarianas.com or (670) 433-9365, or the Tinian Mayor's Office at (670) 433-1802. ***(MVA)***

PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY
COMMONWEALTH HEALTHCARE CORPORATION
REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)
FACILITY/PLANT OPERATIONS
RFP24-CHCC/FACILITY-008

SUBMISSION DEADLINE: February 26th, 2024 TIME: 10:00AM (CHST)

"FUEL, LUBRICATION AND TESTING SERVICES"

INTERESTED PARTIES CAN DOWNLOAD THIS **REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL** FROM THE CHCC WEBSITE [WWW.CHCC.HEALTH]. ONCE AT THE SITE, NAVIGATE TO REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS TAB ON THE LEFT NAVIGATION BAR. CLICK ON THE URL FOR THIS RFP. YOU WILL BE REQUIRED TO ENTER DATA TO ALLOW US TO TRACK ALL REQUESTS FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY.

THE CHCC RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY AND ALL PROPOSAL AND TO WAIVE ANY IMPERFECTIONS IN ANY PROPOSAL, IF TO DO SO SHALL BE IN THE INTEREST OF THE CHCC. ALL PROPOSALS SHALL BECOME THE EXCLUSIVE PROPERTY OF THE COMMONWEALTH HEALTHCARE CORPORATION.

/S/ ESTHER L. MUNA
CHCC CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

/S/ CORA P. ADA
DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT & SUPPLY

PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY
COMMONWEALTH HEALTHCARE CORPORATION
REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL
FACILITY - GENERAL SUPPORT SERVICES (GSS)

GROUND MAINTENANCE SERVICES
RFQ24-CHCC/GSS-007

The Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation (CHCC) is a public corporation and autonomous agency of the Government of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). In accordance with its Procurement Rules and Regulations, NMIAC Subchapter 140-80.1-205(1), CHCC hereby seeks the services of qualified Contractor to provide Ground Maintenance Services thru RFP24-CHCC/GSS-007.

The Request for Proposals will be available on January 25th, 2024 online at www.chcc.health, navigate to the RFP tab on the left navigation bar, click on the URL for this RFP24-CHCC/GSS-007.

A mandatory pre proposal meeting and on-site assessment will be held on January 30th, 2024 at 9:00AM at the CHC Continuing Education Room right before the cafeteria. The Statement of Confidentiality will be collected prior to the actual on-site assessment.

Contractors shall submit proposals and all supporting documents to Corazon P. Ada, Director, CHCC Division of Procurement and Supply Office located at the Main Administrative Building or via email at procurement@chcc.health no later than: 1000hrs (10:00am) Chamorro Standard Time on February 26th, 2024.

/S/ ESTHER L. MUNA
CHCC CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

/S/ CORA P. ADA
DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT & SUPPLY

PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY
COMMONWEALTH HEALTHCARE CORPORATION
REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL
FACILITY - GENERAL SUPPORT SERVICES (GSS)

HOUSEKEEPING SERVICES
RFQ24-CHCC/GSS- -005

The Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation (CHCC) is a public corporation and autonomous agency of the Government of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). In accordance with its Procurement Rules and Regulations, NMIAC Subchapter 140-80.1-205(1), CHCC hereby seeks the services of qualified Contractor to Housekeeping Services to the Hospital, Outpatient Clinics, Dental, Executive Offices and Other Federal Programs thru RFP24-CHCC/GSS–005.

The Request for Proposals will be available on January 24th, 2024 online at www.chcc.health, navigate to the RFP tab on the left navigation bar, click on the URL for this RFP24-CHCC/GSS–005.

A mandatory pre proposal meeting and on-site assessment will be held on January 30th, 2024 at 9:00AM at the CHC Continuing Education Room right before the Cafeteria. The Statement of Confidentiality will be collected prior to the actual on-site assessment.

Contractors shall submit proposals and all supporting documents to Corazon P. Ada, Director, CHCC Division of Procurement and Supply Office located at the Main Administrative Building or via email at procurement.chcc@health no later than: 1000hrs (10:00 am) Chamorro Standard Time on February 26th, 2024.

/S/ ESTHER L. MUNA
CHCC CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

/S/ CORA P. ADA
DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT & SUPPLY

COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

INVITATION FOR BIDS
CUC-IFB-24-009

ROTA WATER CAVE ENCLOSURE/ REPLACEMENT OF WOOD STAIRS

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed bids from qualified firms for the Rota Water Cave Enclosure / Replacement of Wood Stairs in Rota, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The project consists, in general, of the installation of a new 2-inch Sch. 40 G.I. Pipes Stairs and other related work. The work shall be done in accordance with the Project Plans and Specifications and without disruption to the daily operation of the water system.

This project is funded by a grant from the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) Public Law 20-61.

CUC requires the Project to be completed in **150 calendar days** from the date of award of the contract.

Prospective Bidders for this IFB must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The Bid Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of $200.00 (non-refundable) for one IFB package set.

A Pre-Bid Conference followed by a Site Visit is scheduled on **January 24, 2024 at 10:00 AM (ChST)** at the CUC Main Conference Room, 3rd Floor, Room No.17, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building.

One (1) original and Five (5) hard copies must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked **"CUC-IFB-24-009, Rota Water Cave Enclosure / Replacement of Wood Stairs Project"**, to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Comme cial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, **no later than 10:00 AM (ChST) on February 13, 2024**, at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. **Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered.**

A Bid Guarantee of *fifteen percent (15%)* of the total bid price must accompany the bids. The bid guarantee may be in cash, certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety.

A *Payment Bond* of one hundred (100%) percent and a *Performance Bond* of one hundred (100%) percent of the total bid price will be required upon the execution of the contract by the successful bidders. The Payment and Performance bond must be executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety or other surety acceptable to the Attorney General. Surety Company must be authorized to do business in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

All insurers' questions, concerns and qualification shall be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). *Bidders are required to submit clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.*

All bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract. Bidders are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations.

This Invitation for Bids does not commit CUC to the award of a contract or contracts, nor to pay any cost incurred in the preparation and submission of bids in anticipation of a contract.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from pre-registered bidders and must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on January 26, 2024**, to Mr. Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Administrator, via email at manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Mr. Edgar Tuazon, Project Engineer – via email at edgar.tuazon@cucgov.org and Ms. Christie L. Sablan, Procurement & Supply, Senior Administrative Technician – via email at christie.sablan@cucgov.org

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids for any reason and waive any defects in said bid proposal, if in its sole opinion, to do so would be in the best interest of CUC. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

BETTINA G. TERLAJE
Acting Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

LARGEST

From page 1

Academy, and Grace Christian Academy made their way around the tables of companies and agencies that were present.

The junior/senior students that are enrolled in Co-Op, or Cooperative Education, an elective course offered in the CNMI Public School System and GCA, had a pick of where they want to train from over 35 companies in the government and private sector.

According to Brandon Nicholas, program coordinator of the Cooperative Education Program, the program "uses a combined strategy of in-classroom instruction and on-the-job training to provide our students with the tools and knowledge necessary to enter our workforce."

LEIGH GASES

Pacific Islands Club Saipan's human resource manager Jake Maratita, second from right, and HR supervisor Matthea Guillermo, rightmost, assist Co-Op students applying for PIC during the Spring '24 Co-Op Job Fair last Tuesday at the Taga Ballroom of the Saipan World Resort.

Compared to past Co-Op Job Fairs, the Spring '24 Co-Op Job Fair by far has the most number of attendees, Nicholas said.

"The turnout was great. … Traditionally, we know that spring semester will have more students because there's a lot more flexibility with their schedule. I think we can consider it a success, but the success lies with how well our students do," he added.

Terrence Calma, a senior at MHS who has been in the program since his junior year and is currently working at his dream company, Latte Built Gym, said he enjoys his time there. As for the program, he said, "I think the Co-Op program is a very good program that all students should try… because it could give you some work experience early on, and help you out a little bit if you need some extra cash."

Another senior at MHS, Derick Delos Santos, said the company he is most interested in is the Law Office of Robert T. Torres because he likes debating and wants to pursue a career in law or criminal justice.

Theodore Rodgers, a junior at GCA, said the job fair was much larger and had more companies than the past couple two years he's attended and that it's always a great opportunity for students.

Savannah Delos Santos, Sexual Assault Response team manager at the Northern Marianas Coalition Against Domestic & Sexual Violence was seen assisting a few students.

Kristina Springer-Torres, a Co-Op Education Program teacher at MHS, said, "We're really thankful because this is such a great opportunity for the students to get out there and get some real hands-on training. It's also great for the companies to do their community services and have a pool of trainable employees."

FREE READING GLASSES

The 6th Lions Club of CNMI led by its charter president, Arceli Lizama, and current president Alexander Escober distributed 50 flyers about cancer awareness and 140 pieces of free reading glasses at the Sabalu Market in Fishing Base, Garapan last Saturday, Feb. 3. Members and officers of the Saipan Centennial Lions Club also participated in the program, which was held in collaboration with the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp.'s Public Health Services Non-Communicable Disease Programs.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

DPS

From page 1

at a residence on Capital Hill last Jan. 19.

The DPS statement said that an arrest warrant was issued on Feb. 6, 2024, against Castro, who is charged with burglary, theft, and receiving stolen property. Bail is set at $50,000. The warrant was signed by Superior Court Associate Judge Joseph N. Camacho.

It was not immediately clear how the police came to identify Castro as a person of interest in the Capital Hill burglary.

According to assistant Chief of Police Simon Manacop, the arrest warrant stems from a burglary and theft incident that occurred at a residence on Capital Hill that was reported on Jan 19 at around 6:22am.

"The victim of this incident reported that cash, jewelry, designer bags, and assorted electronics were stolen and that the approximate value combined was $126,000," he said.

Manacop said DPS is urging anyone who may have any information on Castro's whereabouts, or even information related to the burglary and theft incident, to call the DPS Criminal Investigation Bureau at (670) 664-9042, DPS headquarters at (670) 664-9001, or the Crime Stoppers hotline at (670) 234-7272 if they wish to remain anonymous.

DPS is also seeking the community's help in locating a missing person, Jesus Pinaula Rios.

Rios is a 67-year-old male residing in Finasisu who was last seen on Feb. 5.

According to reports, Rios was last seen at about 12pm by a family member who witnessed him go outside the home to smoke.

"Rios remains missing. CIB detectives are canvassing neighbors and nearby establishments. DPS has requested assistance from the Department of Fire and Emergency Medical Services for their search and rescue unit to assist in the search operation. At this point, there is no indication to suggest any criminal offense associated with the disappearance," said Manacop.

FIFTH

From page 1

plan to transport Chinese nationals without valid or current legal immigration status to Guam.

Specifically, Tang was the one who paid Taitano $5,000 to transport Kun Li, Chang Cai Dong, Hong Jiang Yang, Ying Chun Wu, Kun Gao, Mei Fang Weng, Xiaohua Li, Xiulan Huang, and himself to Guam. All the Chinese nationals have been charged separately and have already pleaded guilty.

Tang, during a hearing before U.S. District Court for the NMI Magistrate Judge Heather Kennedy, pleaded guilty to the allegations against him.

He has since been placed on supervised release pending sentencing.

According to information on this case, Tang, Taitano, and Reyes orchestrated the scheme.

To carry out the plan, Taitano and Reyes allegedly hired Sablan and Marlik to captain a small motorboat from Smiling Cove Marina on Saipan to Guam on or about July 9, 2023.

According to court documents, Taitano and Reyes were paid up to $5,000 per individual.

Reyes agreed to pay Sablan to drive the boat and to pay Marlik to provide assistance like refueling the boat.

However, enroute, the boat ran out of fuel and began to drift just before it reached the island of Rota. They all had to be rescued by the U.S. Coast Guard.

The U.S. government wants to forfeit the vessel and the proceeds from carrying out the scheme.

YES

From page 1

Democratic Party banner.

"These are hard times right now, but I can assure you we're going to do everything we can to make things better. And I will do that in [Washington], D.C. I will be there for you," said Propst in his remarks, drawing cheers from friends, colleagues, and supporters who attended the event held at the home of his late parents in Susupe.

Gov. Arnold I. Palacios came to support Propst's intent to run as delegate. House of Representatives Speaker Edmund S. Villagomez (Ind-Saipan) also came, along with some other House members.

» Palacios backs Propst's intent to run as delegate

There is no word yet on who else will be running for delegate position.

Many people who attended the event signed a petition to elect Propst, who has already submitted his letter of intent to run for delegate under the NMI Democratic Party.

Propst is serving his fifth term in the CNMI House of Representatives, representing Precinct 1, where he has consistently emerged as top vote getter.

Propst acknowledged in his remarks that incumbent Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (D-MP) is irreplaceable. "He is somebody that regardless of who gets in, whether it's me or somebody else, I can assure you that to try to compare ourselves to somebody that served proudly 16 years is not going to be easy," he said.

Sablan recently announced that he will not be seeking a ninth term as delegate.

Propst said Sablan has done so much for the Commonwealth and always fought for the less fortunate. "He's always tried to help people and bring people up. That is essentially how I want to serve," he said.

Propst said he wants to follow Sablan's footsteps and his journey, and support the things that he's fought for, but with a few other things that he will be adding to the list.

Nonetheless, Propst said, he will be consulting with Sablan along the way and also "each every one of you."

Former lawmaker Christina Marie E. Sablan, who chairs the Committee-to-elect Propst, said Propst is always humble, always putting the interests of people first.

Sablan said Propst has been a fighter for good governance, for accountability, and for helping the most vulnerable of the community.

"That is one thing that has struck me throughout our friendship for as long as I've known him, for as long as he's been my colleague in the Legislature as well. He drops everything to help the person in front of him who needs help," Sablan said.

Palacios said in a later interview that Propst is very honest and sincere, and that he admires his tenacity.

Palacios said Propst supported his candidacy for governor in the runoff election.

He said he knows that if elected as delegate, Propst is going to work hard for the CNMI.

"I admire him for not being afraid, for being courageous to take on the challenge," the governor said.

Missing sailing vessel 'Malulani' finally arrives in Hawaii

ALAMEDA, Calif.—The missing individual, 60-year-old Noel Rubio, arrived safely in Hawaii with his sailing boat, *Malulani,* on Saturday.

The vessel is a 32-foot Westsail sloop that departed Long Beach, California, on Dec. 28 en route to Kaneohe, O'ahu, Hawaii, crewed by Rubio with a planned arrival date of Jan. 18.

After receiving notification on Friday, the Coast Guard began efforts to locate Rubio and the vessel, *Malulani*.

The Coast Guard used all available means to determine the *Malulani*'s location, including urgent marine information broadcasts and harbor checks in California, Hawaii, and Mexico. He last made contact via cellphone Dec. 28, from south of Catalina Island, California informing a friend that he was en route to Hawaii. The only means of communication aboard the vessel *Malulani* is a VHF-FM marine band radio.

"The Coast Guard is greatly appreciative of the expert consult advice on weather and routes provided by experienced trans-Pacific sailors," said Douglas Samp, a search and rescue mission coordinator in the Rescue Coordination Center Alameda. "Mariners intending to conduct an open ocean passage are highly encouraged to have multiple layers of communication, including a VHF-FM DSC radio, HF DSC radio, satellite communications, and a 406Mhz electronic position indicating radio beacon as the notification of last resort to help SAR authorities locate your position in a time of need." ***(USCG)***

U.S. COAST GUARD DISTRICT 11

Sixty-year-old Noel Rubio arrived safely in Hawaii with his sailing boat *Malulani* on Saturday.

PMMC members hold Beach Road cleanup drive

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Members of the Pentecostal Missionary Church of Christ (4th Watch) gather for a group photo after completing their cleanup drive along Beach Road on Saipan last Sunday.

Members of the Pentecostal Missionary Church of Christ (4th Watch) held a cleanup drive last Sunday by picking up trash along Beach Road on Saipan.

The cleanup drive was spearheaded by PMCC pastors Marcos and Arbie De Vera, along with their children, to kick off the congregation's Family Month initiative.

Members of the congregation cleaned up the section of Beach Road starting from the Quarter Master Road to the United Filipino Organization pavilion in Garapan.

Pastor Marcos De Vera said the cleanup drive has been part of the ministry's tradition spanning over two decades since its inception on Saipan.

De Vera said the tradition symbolizes the congregation's commitment to environmental stewardship and community service.

He said the members' families gather yearly to give back to the community by participating in beach cleanups, adopting and renovating bus stop shelters, and embracing beach pavilion projects.

"It's not just about cleaning up the beaches; it's about strengthening the ties that bind us as a community and fostering a sense of responsibility towards our environment," De Vera said. ***(PR)***

PROCUREMENT SERVICES • CNMI GOVERNMENT
INVITATION TO BID
ITB NO.: ITB24-BECQ/TIN-42400034

SUBMISSION DATE: FEBRUARY 27, 2024 TIME: 09:00 A.M.

"OFFICE SPACE LEASE FOR BECQ ON TINIAN"

COPIES OF THE SPECIFICATIONS MAY BE OBTAINED ON THE MUNIS VENDOR SELF SERVICE PORTAL (https://selfservice.dof.gov.mp/vss/) OR AT THE OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT SERVICES, LOCATED AT BLDG NO. 12552, ANATAHAN DRIVE, CAPTIOL HILL, SAIPAN, DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

QUESTIONS REGARDING THIS ITB CAN BE MADE TO THE BUREAU OF ENVIRONMENTAL & COASTAL QUALITY BY FEBRUARY 14, 2024, TO MRS. ZABRINA S. CRUZ VIA EMAIL AT zabrina.shai@becq.gov.mp

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

THE CNMI GOVERNMENT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, OR PORTIONS THEREOF, AND WAIVE IMMATERIAL DEFECTS IF TO DO SO WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CNMI GOVERNMENT.

/S/ RICHARD V. SALAS
ACTING ADMINISTRATOR, BECQ

/S/ BRIEN S. NICHOLAS JR.
ACTING DIRECTOR, PS

NORTHERN MARIANAS HOUSING CORPORATION
P.O. BOX 500514, Saipan, MP 96950-0514
Email: nmhc@nmhc.gov.mp • Website: http://www.nmhcgov.net
Tels: (670) 234-9447 / 234-6866 / 234-7670 • Fax: (670) 234-9021

PUBLIC DISCLOSURE

NMHC hereby publicly discloses that on September 6, 2023, Henry Ernest U. Hofschneider, an immediate family member of Francs H. Diaz, an employee of the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation, applied for assistance under the Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) Housing Program.

Said applicant has been determined to be a member of a group or class of low to moderate income individuals intended to be beneficiaries of the assisted activity and is applying to receive generally the same benefits being made available to the group or class. Mrs. Diaz is not and shall not be involved in the handling of this grant application.

NMHC discloses this possible conflict pursuant to 24 CFR 92.356 in order to allow any interested person to comment before the application is considered for an exception under the applicable conflict regulations.

Written comments may be faxed to Fax No.: (670) 234-9451, mailed to P.O. Box 500514 Saipan, MP 96950, or emailed to cnmi-cdbg-dr@nmhcgov.net on or before Friday, February 16, 2024.

Dated this 29th day of January, 2024.

/s/
JESSE S. PALACIOS
Corporate Director

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality
Division of Coastal Resources Management
P.O. Box 501304, Saipan, MP 96950
Tel: (670) 664-8300; Fax: (670) 664-8315
www.dcrm.gov.mp

Eli D. Cabrera
Administrator

Richard V. Salas
Director, DCRM

PUBLIC NOTICE

From the
COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
COASTAL MANAGEMENT PROGRAM
of the DIVISION OF COASTAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

DATE: February 8, 2024

NOTICE: The Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality (BECQ) - Division of Coastal Resources Management (DCRM) is currently reviewing the following federal consistency submission(s) for consistency with the CNMI's enforceable policies:

1) Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) consistency determination for the proposed remote communication air to ground (RCAG) tower at Saipan International Airport

Federal consistency is a provision of the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) that requires federal actions that affect the CNMI coastal zone to be consistent to the maximum extent practicable with the enforceable policies of the CNMI's federally approved Coastal Management Program (CMP).

For more information, please visit the public notices on https://dcrm.gov.mp/our-programs/permitting/federal-consistency/. To submit comments, please contact the Division of Coastal Resources Management at fedcon@dcrm.gov.mp. Comments may be submitted within seven days of the publication of this notice. This public notice has been published for compliance with 15 CFR § 930.42.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM, OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
Tel: (670) 664-2371 | Fax: (670) 664-2408 | Caller Box 10007, Saipan, MP 96950

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

RFP24-GOV-CIP-42400042: PROVISION OF ARCHITECT/ENGINEERING SERVICES FOR PROJECT MANAGEMENT FOR 702 CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

SUBMISSION DATE: 10:00 AM ChST MARCH 8, 2024

Governor Arnold I. Palacios and Lt. Governor David M. Apatang, through the Capital Improvement Program (CIP), are soliciting sealed proposals for the *Provision of Environmental Consultant Services for Capital Improvement Projects* funded through the 702 Covenant funding by the Office of Insular Affairs, US Department of Interior.

The project package will be available in digital format only beginning **February 8, 2024** at the Capital Improvement Program Office, Office of the Governor, Juan A. Sablan Administration Building in Capitol Hill, Saipan, during regular working hours or online at Vendor Self Service (selfservice.dof.gov.mp/vss/Vendors/VBids). Proposals must precisely follow the submittal requirements identified in the Scope of Work.

A Pre-Proposal Meeting will be held via Zoom Meetings at **10:00 AM on February 28, 2024.** Questions regarding this RFP may be sumitted via email to Ms. Nerissa B. Karakaya at nerissa.benavente@gov.mp no later than **4:00 PM ChST March 1, 2024.** All Questions and answers will be shared with all prospective proposers.

Proposers located outside of the CNMI must fill out and submit the Notice of Intent Form to the Acting Director of Procurement Services no later than **10:00 AM ChST. March 8, 2024.**

Proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria: (1) Qualifications of personnel or sub-consultants – 40%; (2) Past Experience and Performance as a Project Manager – 40%; and (3) Project Methodology – 20%.

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS, AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

/S/ Arnold I. Palacios
Governor, CNMI

/S/ Brien S. Nicholas Jr., Acting Director
CNMI Procurement Services

DIVISION OF PROCUREMENT SERVICES
CNMI GOVERNMENT

INVITATION TO BID
ITB NO.: ITB24-GOV/CIP-42400032

SUBMISSION DATE: MARCH 1, 2024 TIME: 09:00 A.M.

"LEASE OF ONE (1) CLASS 'I' VEHICLE"

COPIES OF THE SPECIFICATIONS MAY BE OBTAINED ON THE MUNIS VENDOR SELF SERVICE PORTAL (https://selfservice.dof.gov-.mp/vss/) OR AT THE OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT SERVICES, LOCATED AT BLDG NO. 12552, ANATAHAN DRIVE, CAPTIOL HILL, SAIPAN, DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

QUESTIONS REGARDING THIS ITB CAN BE MADE TO THE CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM BY FEBRUARY 22, 2024, TO MS. KEONA DLG. TORRES VIA EMAIL AT ktorres.cip@gmail.com

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

THE CNMI GOVERNMENT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, OR PORTIONS THEREOF, AND WAIVE IMMATERIAL DEFECTS IF TO DO SO WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CNMI GOVERNMENT.

/S/ ELIZABETH BALAJADIA
ADMINISTRATOR, CIP

/S/ BRIEN SERS NICHOLAS JR.
Acting Director, PS

Multinational allies, partners conduct Elephant Walk during Cope North 24

GUAM—U.S. Air Force, Marines, and Navy, Royal Australian Air Force, Japan Air Self-Defense Force, French Air and Space Force, and Republic of Korea Air Force aircraft participated in an Elephant Walk for Cope North 2024 at Andersen Air Force Base, Guam last Feb. 5, 2024.

This Elephant Walk was a coalition of 33 aircraft, operating together to present a united front with allies and partners to enhance integrated deterrence.

An Indo-Pacific Command news release states that the United States does not fight alone, nor does it deter alone. Relationships and increased operational capabilities with allies and partners are vital to preserving a free and open Indo-Pacific.

U.S. AIR FORCE

Multinational partners conduct an Elephant Walk as part of Cope North 2024 at Andersen Air Force Base, Guam, Feb. 5, 2024.

"Being able to direct and oversee this amazing showing of interoperability from Andersen AFB has filled me with awe," said Senior Airman Robert Rennie, an air traffic controller assigned to the 36th Operations Support Squadron. "The sheer amount of aircraft and the way our allies and partners operate together with us is inspiring."

Elephant Walks date back to World War II, where aircraft assembled in a single file line. Events like this demonstrate the airpower presence, strength, and preparedness that exists across the Indo-Pacific region.

"When I see something like an Elephant Walk, I know we are moving in the right direction to ensure deterrence," said Rennie. "This showcase proves to our adversaries that we aren't afraid to work together, and we are the best at it."

As long-term strategic competition persists and continues to challenge international institutions, it is vital that bonds are strengthened with allies and partners to sharpen the competitive edge, secure common interests, and promote shared values.

"On behalf of RAAF, JASDF and the USAF exercise leadership, we are excited to kick off Cope North 24 with this successful demonstration of interoperability through the Elephant Walk," said Lt Col David Overstreet, Cope North lead planner. "Throughout the exercise we aim to aggressively practice combat air forces and mobility air forces dispersal activities in concert with all six participating nations. Our network of alliances and partnerships remains the backbone of global security." ***(PR)***

CHCC hosts a stakeholder meeting for Community Health Assessment project

CHCC

Participants of the Community Stakeholder Meeting have their picture taken at the Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan last Feb. 6, 2024,.

The Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. hosted last Feb. 6, 2024, a Community Stakeholder Meeting at the Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan as part of a larger Community Health Assessment process being facilitated by CHCC and RedStar International, in partnership with multiple community agencies and stakeholders.

The event aimed to consult and engage stakeholders in the CHA process so that they are involved in the identification and selection of health priorities that will drive programs and interventions focused on improving the health and well-being of the communities and families that reside in the CNMI.

CHCC has gone through several organizational and governance changes over the last 10 years. Despite these changes, a few things remain constant, such as the importance of public health in our healthcare system and its role in advancing health for our community.

Unlike other U.S.-affiliated Pacific Islands and most states, the CNMI is unique in that the CHCC is the local, state, and territorial health agency, comprised of both our main medical and public health services. This internal partnership is the basis of our healthcare system, meaning one cannot function without the other. While hospitals focus on the health of individual patients, public health focuses on the health of the entire CNMI population. This integrated model of clinical and public health allows our most valuable components of the healthcare system to be shared and streamlined, including our workforce and limited resources to further support accessible and trustworthy patient care and the provision of essential public health services for our CNMI community.

CHCC serves the CNMI community at three primary locations (Saipan, Tinian, and Rota). The Tinian Health Center and Rota Health Center are satellite facilities of CHCC that provide primary health care, including health promotion and prevention activities in their areas. The corporation not only works with our local CNMI government but also with various national agencies under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S Department of Agriculture, as well as the World Health Organization, to reach better health outcomes on a local, regional, national, and global level.

Through the Division of Public Health Services, CHCC offers a wide range of community health programs for women, adults, families, adolescents, and children with special healthcare needs. Some services include family planning, HIV/STD prevention and treatment, nicotine cessation, kidney health classes, immunization, diabetes self-management and support for parents of children with special healthcare needs through the Family-to-Family Health Information Center. Assistance to access services is also available for newborn screening and service coordination, breast and cervical screening, and transportation to health-related appointments. Many Public Health Programs and Services are made accessible to the community through an integrated care model delivered by CHCC outpatient clinics. The Family Planning program, for example, is accessible to the CNMI community through the CHCC Women's Clinic, Tinian Health Center, Rota Health Center, or the Mobile Clinic. Programs like Nicotine Cessation or the Diabetes Self-Management Education (DSME) classes are available to clinic patients through a referral from a primary care physician to Public Health.

Additional benefits of the CHA include:

- Improved organizational and community coordination and collaboration
- Increased knowledge about public health and the interconnectedness of activities
- Strengthened partnerships within state and local public health systems
- Identified strengths and weaknesses to address in quality improvement efforts
- Baselines on performance to use in preparing for accreditation
- Benchmarks for public health practice improvements

The successful completion of the CHA brings the CHCC closer to receive Public Health Accreditation from the Public Health Accreditation Board. Amongst many advantages, accreditation helps stimulate quality improvement, improve accountability and transparency, strengthen the utilization of resources, and improve the capacity of the department to provide high quality programs and services*. ***(CHCC)***

Source: NORC at the University of Chicago, Evaluation Findings: Assessing Outcomes from Public Health Accreditation (June 2021).

USCG sails to FSM outer islands with equipment, supplies

U.S. EMBASSY KOLONIA

The crew of USCGC *Oliver Henry* (WPC 1140) load resources in Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia, on Feb. 1, 2024, for delivery to the outer islands of the FSM to combat the effects of a current drought.

U.S. EMBASSY KOLONIA

Petty Officer 1st Class Jon Borja, a health services technician from LOG-X, takes a moment for a photo as he and the crew of USCGC *Oliver Henry* (WPC 1140) load resources in Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia, on Feb. 1, 2024, for delivery to the outer islands of the FSM to combat the effects of a current drought.

U.S. EMBASSY KOLONIA

The crew of USCGC *Oliver Henry* (WPC 1140) arrives in Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia, on Feb. 1, 2024.

U.S. EMBASSY KOLONIA

The crew of USCGC *Oliver Henry* (WPC 1140) load resources in Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia, on Feb. 1, 2024, for delivery to the outer islands of the FSM to combat the effects of a current drought.

U.S. EMBASSY KOLONIA

The crew of USCGC *Oliver Henry* (WPC 1140) arrive to Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia, on Feb. 1, 2024.

CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER SARA MUIR

The crew of USCGC *Oliver Henry* (WPC 1140) offload supplies from the small boat in Nukuoro Atoll, Federated States of Micronesia, on Feb. 2, 2024.

U.S. EMBASSY KOLONIA

The crew of USCGC *Oliver Henry* (WPC 1140) spend recess with students at Nukuoro Elementary in Nukuoro Atoll, Federated States of Micronesia, on Feb. 2, 2024.

U.S. EMBASSY KOLONIA

The crew of USCGC *Oliver Henry* (WPC 1140) load solar panels in Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia, on Feb. 1, 2024, for delivery to the outer islands of the FSM to combat the effects of a current drought.

U.S. EMBASSY KOLONIA

In Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia, the crew of USCGC *Oliver Henry* (WPC 1140) load specialized heavy-duty batteries donated by the government of Australia's Pacific Maritime Security Program to ensure the functionality of reverse osmosis machines and other supplies on Feb. 1, 2024, for delivery to the outer islands of the FSM to combat the effects of a current drought.

POHNPEI, Federated States of Micronesia—The U.S. Coast Guard cutter *Oliver Henry* (WPC 1140) crew arrived at Dekhitik Harbor in Pohnpei on Feb. 1 as part of an international effort to deliver essential supplies and equipment to the drought-affected outer islands of Nukuoro and Kapingamarangi Atolls.

Due to the El Niño weather phenomenon, these remote communities required immediate assistance, including water purification solutions, to combat the scarcity of potable water.

Embarked on this vital mission were RO technicians Dudley Lorrin from the International Organization for Migration and Jimmy Edward from the Pohnpei Department of Public Safety. The mission was critical in providing immediate relief, including the transportation and operational setup of reverse osmosis units capable of converting seawater into drinkable water. These units, crucial for the survival of the island communities, can produce up to 350 gallons of fresh water daily and are powered by solar panels or high-capacity batteries.

Significantly, the deployment was supported by various partners. The U.S. Navy Seabees repaired an IOM reverse osmosis unit in preparation for the mission. The government of Australia's Pacific Maritime Security Program donated specialized heavy-duty batteries to ensure the RO units' functionality. Additionally, the Pohnpei state government contributed one ton of rice, emphasizing the collaborative nature of this humanitarian operation.

Upon reaching Nukuoro, the USCGC *Oliver Henry* crew swiftly made an existing RO unit operational with the newly transported batteries, demonstrating adaptability and technical proficiency. Petty Officer 1st Class Kai Ruiz, an electrician's mate, connected two 12V batteries to the island's RO pump using spare parts from both the cutter and the local community—a testament to the crew's resourcefulness and commitment to the mission.

In Kapingamarangi, the crew performed a successful systems check on the local RO unit, confirming its full mission capability. Troubleshooting efforts also extended to the solar system and HF radio, identifying the need for replacement of the decade-old solar batteries and the HF radio antenna—issues earmarked for future attention by local government authorities.

The mission's cargo included 2,000 lbs of rice, two RO generator kits, three solar panel kits, and medical supplies, directly addressing the immediate needs of Nukuoro and Kapingamarangi. Upon departure, three medical kits, 80 gallons of bottled water donated by U.S. Coast Guard members and brought from Guam, diesel fuel, and various paper products were offloaded in Kapingamarangi, reflecting a comprehensive approach to aid delivery.

"Our visit was more than a delivery mission; it was an opportunity to strengthen ties with the island communities," said Lt. Ray Cerrato, commanding officer of *Oliver Henry*. "The crew's engagement with local schools and villages left a lasting impression, underscoring the U.S. Coast Guard's commitment to the well-being of these remote populations. The gratitude expressed by the village chiefs and the anticipation of future visits highlight the enduring relationships fostered by these endeavors."

This mission exemplifies the U.S. Coast Guard's dedication to humanitarian aid and international cooperation, ensuring the well-being of vulnerable communities in the Pacific. The collective effort of all parties involved, from the initial loading in Guam to the final delivery and operational support on the islands, showcases a unified response to the challenges faced by Nukuoro and Kapingamarangi, reinforcing the U.S. Coast Guard's role as a pivotal force for good in the region.

USCGC *Oliver Henry*'s crew is conducting the first U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam expeditionary patrol of 2024 under Operation Rematau and Operation Blue Pacific. The *Oliver Henry* is the 40th 154-foot Sentinel-class Fast Response Cutter named for Oliver T. Henry, Jr., an enlisted African American Coast Guard member first to break the color barrier of a then-segregated Service. It homeports in Guam, working with U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam, which comprises nearly 300 personnel to provide a significant portion of the U.S. Coast Guard's enduring regional presence in Oceania. ***(USCG)***

Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER
Volume XXXIV, Issue No. 28

Published daily at 2/F JP Center,
Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, CNMI
Mailing Address: PMB 34, Box 10001, Saipan, MP, 96950

Mark Rabago EDITOR
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com

MEMBER

The Associated Press | Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

Biden bows to Putin, environmentalists

President Joe Biden just sent an early Valentine's Day gift to Russian President Vladimir Putin and radical environmentalists. That's going to cause heartache for a lot of other people.

Late last month, Biden announced a pause on permits for exporting liquid natural gas to non-Free Trade Agreement countries. The move stops needed approvals for export facilities in Louisiana and Texas. Basically, the government is denying private companies the ability to build facilities they would use to sell a legal and widely used product.

The United States has a virtually endless supply of natural gas and can increase supply quickly. The gas can be moved via pipeline, but to send it overseas, it's chilled and shipped on huge tankers. Those ships require LNG export terminals, like those Biden just halted. Demand for U.S. natural gas increased dramatically after Putin invaded Ukraine. Current export terminals can't keep up with demand.

Biden claimed the move was necessary to update economic and environmental analyses, but that's not the real motivation. "We will heed the calls of young people and frontline communities who are using their voices to demand action from those with the power to act," Biden said in a statement announcing the move.

It echoes a pledge he made during his presidential campaign. "I want you to look at my eyes," Biden told a young woman in 2019. "I guarantee you. I guarantee you. We're going to end fossil fuel."

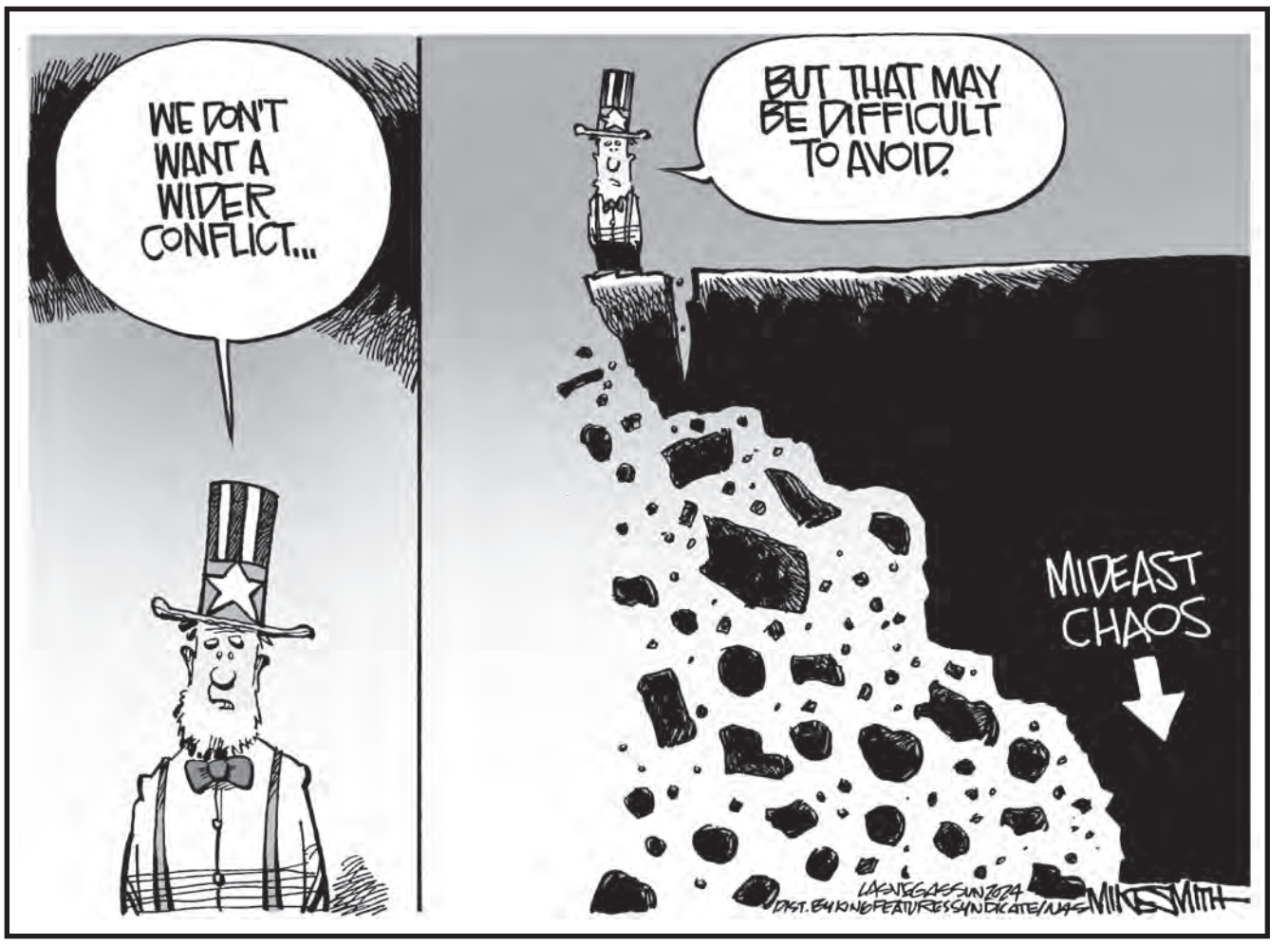
Biden and much of the progressive left believe global warming "is the existential threat of our time," as a White House fact sheet put it. Therefore, the United States should stop shipping natural gas to other countries. Because they won't have access to that natural gas, the theory goes, carbon emissions will decrease. Notice the administration doesn't even attempt to specify how much this will lower global temperatures.

But even if you accept those premises, they are undergirded by a major flaw. Other countries will continue to demand cheap and reliable energy. If they can't get it from the United States, they'll look elsewhere. The second- and third-biggest exports of natural gas are Russia and Qatar. Russia, led by Putin, became even more of a global pariah after invading Ukraine. The leaders of Hamas lived in luxury in Qatar when the Oct. 7 terror attack occurred.

A coherent strategic policy would have the United States using its energy bounty to expand its influence through exports rather than undercutting its own interests by sending potential customers to Russia and Qatar. The other alternative many countries have is coal power, which produces higher carbon emissions than natural gas.

Putin may be sweet on this move, but it's a sour one for Americans. Biden should rescind this decision.

©2024 Las Vegas Review-Journal


WE DON'T WANT A WIDER CONFLICT...
BUT THAT MAY BE DIFFICULT TO AVOID.
MIDEAST CHAOS
LAS VEGAS SUN 2024
DIST. BY KING FEATURES SYNDICATE/HEARST
MIKE SMITH

'Just say no' can kill kids. Teach them how to stay safe in the fentanyl era

By SCOTT HADLAND and JOSEPH FRIEDMAN
LOS ANGELES TIMES

Melanie Ramos was only 15 years old when she died of a suspected overdose in a high school bathroom in Hollywood. Police reported that she and a friend had purchased pills they thought were prescription painkillers but which were likely fakes containing fentanyl, a potent opioid incorporated into counterfeit pills widely available in the illicit drug market.

Fentanyl has caused such overdoses to rise sharply despite declining drug use among young people. Recent data suggest it kills an average of 22 teens every week around the nation. Tragic stories like Melanie's are playing out across the country—and at an unprecedented rate. In a new analysis in the New England Journal of Medicine, we found that fatal overdoses among U.S. teens aged 14-18 hit an all-time high in 2022.

Melanie was one of 111 teens who died between 2020 and 2022 in L.A. County, a hot spot where overdoses have spiked. We found hot spot counties across the U.S., but Southern California was uniquely hard hit. Of the 19 such counties we identified nationwide, six were in this region: Los Angeles, Orange (61 deaths), San Bernardino (55), Riverside (41), San Diego (36) and Kern (30).

There are signs that teen overdoses in California dropped from 2021 to 2022, but this trend is still new, and hot spots can still occur anywhere—often unexpectedly. Every corner of America should be prepared.

Overdose deaths are preventable. However, reducing teen overdoses requires a dramatic shift in drug-prevention programming: It needs to emphasize safety rather than abstinence alone.

Drug use by teens is becoming more deadly, not more common. From 2002 to 2022, the share of high school seniors who had ever used illicit drugs declined from 21% to 8%. Teen drug use overall is at its lowest rate in decades. But fentanyl, which is found not only in counterfeit pills but also as a contaminant in other drugs, puts teens at unprecedented risk. Nearly two-thirds of teens who die from fentanyl have no known prior opioid use, a reminder that even first-time or infrequent exposure can be deadly.

Drug prevention has long focused on keeping teens from trying drugs, which is a worthy goal. But it has lacked messaging for teens who do use and may end up in danger as a result. Teachers, parents, medical practitioners and others who provide drug prevention counseling should clearly communicate that any pill not prescribed by a physician or dispensed by a pharmacy has a significant chance of being a counterfeit containing a potentially lethal amount of fentanyl.

This does not mean using scare tactics, which have been shown to backfire. As modeled by programs such as Safety First, available through Stanford, this approach should instead tap into teens' desire to keep themselves and their peers safe and give them strategies to do so.

These strategies include never using alone (so someone is available to intervene in an overdose), starting with a small amount of a drug (e.g., a quarter pill rather than a whole pill) to assess its potency, and avoiding mixing pills with alcohol and other sedating substances.

Programming should also help teens recognize the signs of an overdose and teach them how to respond—by calling 911 and providing the nasal spray naloxone (Narcan) if it's available. Schools should have naloxone on the premises—as has been the case in the L.A. Unified School District since late 2022, following Melanie Ramos' death—and help teens understand how to access it on and off campus. Narcan recently became available over the counter, and teens can obtain it at pharmacies or get a doctor's prescription for it.

Teens who seek out pills to address depression, anxiety, trauma or other mental health concerns additionally need referrals to evidence-based mental health treatment such as counseling and, when appropriate, medications—which should be distinguished from the counterfeit pills widely available on the illicit market.

There are some young people who might intentionally seek fentanyl, including the 1 in every 100 U.S. teens who has an opioid addiction. Keeping these adolescents safe requires educating them and their peers on how to recognize signs of addiction, where to receive care and the effectiveness of buprenorphine, a lifesaving but underused treatment for opioid misuse. Given the urgent need to intervene early, schools, families and doctors should be aware of local treatment programs and refer teens to them; the federal government maintains a searchable directory.

Emphasizing safety in drug use messaging to young people will encounter opposition from policymakers and others, as it means confronting the uncomfortable reality that some teens use drugs. However, research indicates that teaching safety does not cause teens to use more drugs. Drug-prevention programming can still tell teens they shouldn't use substances while equipping them with the tools to protect themselves if they do. Teens need this knowledge before more young lives are tragically lost.

Scott Hadland (@DrScottHadland) is the chief of adolescent medicine at Mass General for Children and an associate professor of pediatrics at Harvard Medical School. Joseph Friedman (@JosephRFriedman) is a substance-use researcher at UCLA.

Black History Month: A shared American story

By F. WILLIS JOHNSON
The Fulcrum

F. Willis Johnson is a United Methodist pastor, the author of Holding Up Your Corner: Talking About Race in Your Community *(Abingdon Press, 2017) and program director for the Bridge Alliance, which houses The Fulcrum.*

Amid the backdrop of an imminent presidential election, geopolitical discord and tensions within our democratic republic, I take a moment to reflect upon Black History Month's enduring significance in our modern era. A period of remembrance and reflection, Black History Month is not a mere historical footnote but a living, breathing testament to the Black American story—a narrative as vital now as it was when Carter G. Woodson first inaugurated Negro History Week nearly a century ago.

Black History Month is a journey through the annals of time where the brambles of profound injustice trapped the existence of African Diasporic people to the luminous trails forged through unyielding resilience, intellect and indomitable spirit. The inheritance left by our ancestors is not merely a record of bygone adversities and victories; it serves as a cornerstone for comprehending our present and constructing a future radiant with promise and anchored in equity.

To me, Black History Month is a sort of palms of lament, an appointed time of tribute to those forebears who laid down pathways of opportunity while shouldering the burdens of systemic inequity. It was an anointed time to venerate figures such as Frederick Douglass and Harriet Tubman, whose relentless quest for freedom shone a guiding light for others to follow. We celebrate visionaries like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., whose dream remains a beacon of hope we continue to pursue, and the myriad unsung heroes whose contributions are inscribed in the heart of our nation, if not upon its monuments.

In an era where information flows like an unceasing deluge, there is a stark absence within the mainstream narrative—a chasm where the history of African Americans is either fragmented or altogether absent. This neglect becomes starkly apparent when one considers the enduring disparities in education, health care, economic opportunity and representation that systematically marginalized Black communities.

Black History Month addresses these inequalities by bringing African American stories to the forefront, acknowledging the pain, sacrifices and remarkable accomplishments that have molded our society. From the intelligent sociological insights of W.E.B. Du Bois to the pioneering political endeavors of Shirley Chisholm, from Katherine Johnson's mathematical prowess that propelled space exploration to Barack Obama's historic ascent to the presidency. To understand this history is to engage not just in remembrance but in active exploration. All Americans should immerse themselves in such narratives—not as a perfunctory acknowledgment, but in recognition that our collective past, welfare, and destinies are intertwined.

Resistance to ethnocultural education and diversity, equity, and inclusive instruction derives from the discomfort of confronting the painful truths of our past. However, sidestepping these critical topics and realities frays the fabric of the nation's story. Through the lens of our shared history, we can gain a deeper understanding of the systemic barriers that continue to influence the present. By embracing these educational efforts, we cultivate a more informed citizenry equipped with the empathy and knowledge necessary to foster a more just and inclusive future. It's not merely about learning dates and names; it's about instilling a consciousness that compels action and cultivates a society where equality and understanding are paramount.

February is a powerful reminder that the quest for justice and equality remains unfulfilled. As the director of programs for Bridge Alliance and as a host fostering dialogues on race within our communities through the Collage podcast, I often stress that awareness is the precursor to action. The insights gleaned from Black History Month observances can cultivate solidarity among all people, promoting a more equitable and representative world.

By honoring the existential existence of African Americans and African Diaspora—their global connections—we pay homage to their enduring living legacy. This February, join us in the ongoing work of elevating and amplifying all the beautiful, diverse stories and people, for they are the threads of a colorfully woven fabric, our shared American experience.

Literacy, news form the base of the hierarchy of democracy needs

By KEVIN FRAZIER
The Fulcrum

When you're stuck in the wilderness, Bear Grylls wouldn't suggest you prioritize searching for Wi-Fi. Instead, survival experts would likely tell you to focus on Maslow's hierarchy of needs. In other words, you should be trying to address physiological needs before you start thinking about self-actualization. There's also a hierarchy of democratic needs, but it's been forgotten by modern advocates for a more participatory and responsive democracy.

Before explaining further, I should make clear that I wholly support efforts to improve our democracy through thoughtful changes, such as open primaries and campaign finance reform. I applaud and encourage those individuals and organizations working on such causes. But I'm increasingly concerned that we're putting Wi-Fi before water. More specifically, I'm concerned about the 48 million adults (or 23 percent) who struggle to read and the 70 million people (or about 20 percent) who live in or may soon live in a news desert. Absent addressing literacy and access to "hard" news – the first two levels of the hierarchy of democratic needs – electoral reforms will not be as impactful as intended.

Let's start with literacy and why it's the first step toward democratic actualization. In a democracy, the people are the "depository of the ultimate powers of the society," according to Thomas Jefferson. "If we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with wholesome discretion," he continued, "the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion by education."

Jefferson wasn't alone in tying education and, by extension, literacy to the capacity of "we, the people" to fulfill our democratic responsibilities. According to historian Alan Talor, the Founders viewed education as "a collective, social benefit essential for free government to endure."

In short, democratic governance places power in the people, but to fully exercise that power individuals must have the requisite skills and knowledge. The alternative – failing to empower individuals to make informed choices about how to wield their power – is akin to giving someone a tennis racket without telling them the rules of the game and teaching them how to serve.

How to exercise that discretion is also contingent on knowing what choices are available – that's where access to "hard" news comes in. Hard news conveys information important to citizens' ability to vote, evaluate policies and identify issues in their communities. The Founders addressed this democratic need by creating an expansive postal system and subsidizing the production and dissemination of newspapers that contained more hard news than advertisements.

Today, in contrast, nearly a fifth of Americans live in a news desert, "a community, either rural or urban, with limited access to the sort of credible and comprehensive news and information that feeds democracy at the grassroots level." To make matters worse, the creation and spread of AI-generated content has the potential to pollute our information ecosystem – making it harder to find democratically salient information. That's why I've called for a "right to reality " that requires subsidies for local and reliable news institutions. This financial boost would make quality journalism more available in every part of the country and, as a result, would dilute the effect of content meant to distract rather than inform.

How best to fully address these needs is a topic for another article. The key takeaway for now is that literacy and access to hard news must be at the top of our reform agenda because they're at the foundation of the hierarchy of democratic needs. The sooner we focus our resources and attention on these foundational issues, the sooner we can build larger and more inclusive coalitions and movements.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Gwendolyn Brooks' Power of Poetry

LITERARY NOOK

By JOEY CONNOLLY
Special to the Saipan Tribune

Joey aka Pepe Batbon Connolly is a retired educator who taught in the CNMI, NOLA, and LVNV. He is a sonnet practitioner who enjoys stargazing.

Gwendolyn Brooks was the author of the poem about Emmet Till in the Literary Nook earlier this week in the *Saipan Tribune*. She was the first black woman to hold the role of "Poetry Consultant to the Library of Congress," a position now referred to as the Poetry Laureate Consultant in Poetry. In her 1960 collection of poems titled *The Bean Eaters* was a poem called "We Real Cool." It has been put in many poetry anthologies since then, including one I used on Tinian when I taught there in the last two decades of the 20th century. It is mentioned here because a recitation of it ultimately led me to come out here in 1984. I'll print its entirety after this flashback. Now here is a narrative on the influential power of Gwendolyn Brooks' poetry.

I have two older brothers and two younger sisters. When I was attending a Catholic high school in Elmira, NY, I went through years of teenage rebellion. During my sophomore year I began skipping school, hanging out in a pool hall and smoking cigars in the City of Elmira. I quit college after two years and acting scholarship, hitchhiked up to the 1969 Woodstock Music Festival and proceeded on a sojourn to adulthood. I met a friend of my younger sisters who was attending a local community college with them. One day she recited "We Real Cool" from memory while we were all hanging out. To say I was flabbergasted that she knew it and had memorized it would be an understatement. It had become sort of a personal anthem of mine since first encountering the poem in Gwendolyn Brooks' *The Bean Eaters.*

To cut to the quick, she was also a beautiful blonde Irish girl. We subsequently went up to SE Alaska. Got married in Ketchikan, AK and lived on a small island in the 14-million acre South Tongass National Forest. The island population, around 12, had no roads, no electricity, no inside plumbing, water from a pipe pounded into a rock ledge. It did have plenty of water, 15 feet of rain a year and plenty of fish in the ocean surrounding it.

After a few years we moved to Oregon to finish degrees, her in Fisheries Science at OSU Corvallis and me in Education at nearby Monmouth, now called Western.

She came home one day to tell me of a fellow student in her fisheries classes from a Pacific island called Saipan. I met him at a grilled fish BBQ. He was from Saipan, *taotao* Tanapag, and there were plenty others there from Saipan and other parts of Micronesia: Ponape, Truk, Kosrae, Yap, the Marshalls and we have been friends for over 40 years. I came to visit him a few years later while teaching in NOLA at a mental hospital and needing a break. Here is the poem "We Real Cool":

We Real Cool

The Pool Players At The Golden Shovel

we real cool
we left school
we lurk late
we strike straight
we sing sin
we thin gin
we jazz June
we die soon

The poem was actually banned in places for using the word "jazz."

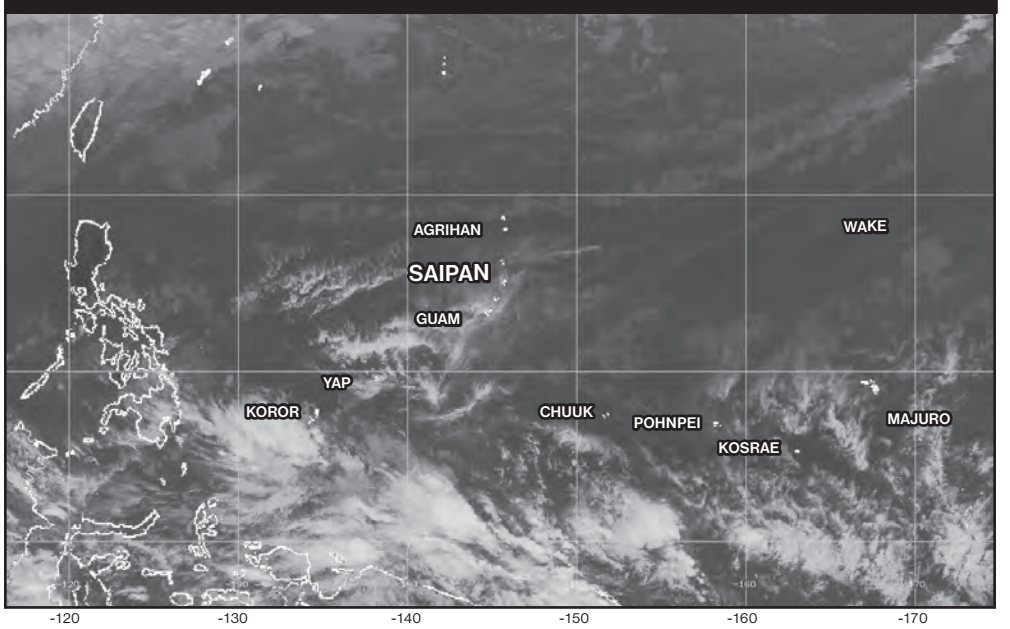
You can listen to Brooks' comments on the poem and reading it on YouTube. Readers may find many other Black poets and their poems at Black Arts Movement online. Next week's focus is Lucille Clifton.

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY
Partly cloudy. East winds 10 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated light showers. East winds 10 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.	Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.	Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.
85 75°	85 75°	85 75°	85 75°	85 75°

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 5:37 AM WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2024

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Satellite and surface observations indicate patchy strato-cumulus clouds over the region, and some higher level clouds were streaming over the Marianas from south and southwest. Surface winds are gentle early this morning at both Saipan and Guam. Ipan Buoy has apparently broken from its mooring and reports not available. Saipan Buoy shows combined seas mostly 5 feet from the north to northeast.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: https://www.weather.gov/gum/

MICRONESIA		▲ ▼ °F
Guam and Rota	Mostly Cloudy	84° / 75°
Palau	Mostly Cloudy	85° / 78°
Yap	Cloudy	85° / 78°
Chuuk	Partly Cloudy	86° / 80°
Pohnpei	Cloudy	85° / 80°
Kosrae	Partly Cloudy	85° / 80°
Majuro	Partly Cloudy	83° / 79°

AROUND THE GLOBE		▲ ▼ °F
Auckland	Fair	79° / 62°
Beijing	Fair	40° / 27°
Hong Kong	Light Rain	67° / 61°
Honolulu	Partly Cloudy	77° / 71°
London	Rain	57° / 40°
Los Angeles	Rain	54° / 49°
Manila	Partly Cloudy	86° / 72°
Melbourne	Partly Cloudy	72° / 55°
Miami	Partly Cloudy	69° / 56°
New York	Clear	42° / 29°
Osaka	Partly Cloudy	50° / 36°
Paris	Rain Shower	55° / 47°
Busan	Sunny	46° / 33°
Rome	Partly Cloudy	63° / 46°
Salem	Clear	64° / 37°
San Francisco	Fair	57° / 47°
Seoul	Cloudy	37° / 28°
Tokyo	Sunny	46° / 34°
Washington, DC	Clear	45° / 34°

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:44 AM	6:17 PM
Friday	6:44 AM	6:18 PM
Saturday	6:43 AM	6:18 PM
Sunday	6:43 AM	6:19 PM
Monday	6:43 AM	6:19 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	5:02 AM	4:27 PM	-
Friday	6:01 AM	5:34 PM	-
Saturday	6:54 AM	6:40 PM	-
Sunday	7:42 AM	7:42 PM	-
Monday	8:27 AM	8:42 PM	-

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY		FEET
12:13 AM	Low Tide	-0.60
7:44 AM	High Tide	1.73
12:41 PM	Low Tide	1.20
5:30 PM	High Tide	1.80

NEWS DESK For news tips, corrections and requests for news coverage, call (670) 235-NEWS (6397), 235-2440, fax 235,3740. E-mail: editor@saipantribune.com. Website:www.saipantribune.com.

CUSTOMER SERVICE For inquiries, purchase of back issues and complaints, call (670) 235-8747, 235-2440, fax 235-3740.

SUBSCRIPTION Published Monday to Friday, Saipan Tribune offers door-to-door on-island delivery at an annual rate of $180. For additional subscription information, call (670) 235-8747 or 235-2769, or fax 235-3740.

ADVERTISING For inquiries contact (670) 235-2769. E-mail: sales@saipantribune.com

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF FEBRUARY 1, 2024

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA076	9:50AM	10:35AM	Daily

SAIPAN- NARITA (NRT)

UA824	7:05AM	9:45AM	1, 3, 5

GUAM-MANILA (MNL)

PR 111	5:55AM	7:55AM	Daily
UA193	7:50PM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Palau
UA183	7:55PM	9:50PM	Daily

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

OZ626/703	3:10AM	10:30PM	4, 7 via ICN
7C3403/2305	4:40AM	10:20PM	Daily
UA076/183	9:50AM	9:50PM	Daily via Guam
UA076/193	9:50AM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Guam, Palau

SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN)

TW308	2:15AM	6:10AM	Daily
OZ626	3:10AM	6:55AM	4,7
7C3403	4:40AM	8:35AM	Daily
7C3461	2:40PM	6:45PM	Daily Feb 7-16 only
7C3405	4:35PM	8:25PM	Daily

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA174	8:00AM	8:45AM	Daily

NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN

UA825	9:25PM	2:00AM+1	2, 4, 7

MANILA (MNL)-GUAM

UA189	00:40AM	6:30AM	3, 6
PR110	10:05PM	3:55AM+1	Daily
UA192	10:40PM	6:30AM+1	2, 5 via Palau
UA184	10:55PM	4:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA189/174	00:40AM	8:45AM+1	3, 6 via Guam
OZ702/625	12:05PM	1:40AM+1	3, 6 via ICN
UA192/174	10:40PM	8:45AM+1	2, 5 via Palau, Guam
UA184/174	10:55PM	8:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6,7 via Guam
7C2306/3462	11:15PM	1:30PM+1	Daily Feb 7-16 only
7C2306/3406	11:15PM	3:30PM+1	Daily

INCHEON (ICN)-SAIPAN

7C3462	08:00AM	1:30PM	Daily Feb 7-16 only
7C3406	10:10AM	3:30PM	Daily
TW307	7:45PM	1:15AM+1	Daily
OZ625	8:20PM	1:40AM+1	3, 6
7C3404	10:15PM	3:35AM+1	Daily

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines; PR, Philippine Airlines; TW, T'Way Air; OZ, Asiana Airlines; 7C, Jeju Air; BX, Air Busan • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JANUARY 2, 2024

SAIPAN TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1301	SAIPAN	ROTA	08:30	09:00	Daily
1302	SAIPAN	ROTA	10:30	11:00	Daily
1303	SAIPAN	ROTA	15:30	16:00	Daily

ROTA TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3101	ROTA	SAIPAN	9:30	10:00	Daily
3102	ROTA	SAIPAN	11:30	12:00	Saturday & Sunday
3103	ROTA	SAIPAN	13:30	14:00	Monday To Friday
3104	ROTA	SAIPAN	16:30	17:00	Daily

ROTA TO GUAM

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3401	ROTA	GUAM	11:30	12:00	Monday To Friday

GUAM TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
4301	GUAM	ROTA	12:30	13:00	Monday To Friday

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1201	SAIPAN	TINIAN	7:30	7:45	Daily
1202	SAIPAN	TINIAN	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	SAIPAN	TINIAN	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	SAIPAN	TINIAN	10:00	10:15	Daily
1206	SAIPAN	TINIAN	14:00	14:15	Daily
1207	SAIPAN	TINIAN	15:00	15:15	Daily
1208	SAIPAN	TINIAN	16:00	16:15	Daily
1209	SAIPAN	TINIAN	17:00	17:15	Daily

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
2101	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:00	8:15	Daily
2102	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	TINIAN	SAIPAN	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	TINIAN	SAIPAN	10:30	10:45	Daily
2106	TINIAN	SAIPAN	14:30	14:45	Daily
2107	TINIAN	SAIPAN	15:30	15:45	Daily
2108	TINIAN	SAIPAN	16:30	16:45	Daily
2109	TINIAN	SAIPAN	17:30	17:45	Daily

Business

IRS expects to collect hundreds of billions more in overdue and unpaid taxes

WASHINGTON (AP)—The IRS is poised to take in hundreds of billions of dollars more in overdue and unpaid taxes than previously anticipated, according to new analysis released Tuesday by the Treasury Department and the IRS.

Tax revenues are expected to rise by as much as $561 billion from 2024 to 2034, thanks to stepped-up enforcement made possible with money from the Democrats' Inflation Reduction Act, which became law in August 2022.

The Congressional Budget Office in 2022 estimated that the tens of billions of new IRS funding provided by the IRA would increase revenues by $180.4 billion from 2022 to 2031. The IRS now says that if IRA funding is restored, renewed and diversified, estimated revenues could reach as much as $851 billion from 2024 to 2034.

Administration officials are using the report to promote President Joe Biden's economic agenda as he campaigns for reelection—and as the IRS continually faces threats to its funding.

"This analysis demonstrates that President Biden's investment in rebuilding the IRS will reduce the deficit by hundreds of billions of dollars by making the wealthy and big corporations pay the taxes they owe," National Economic Adviser Lael Brainard said in a statement.

"Congressional Republicans' efforts to cut IRS funding show that they prioritize letting the wealthiest Americans and big corporations evade their taxes over cutting the deficit," Brainard said.

The Inflation Reduction Act gave the IRS an $80 billion infusion of funds. However, House Republicans built a $1.4 billion reduction to the IRS into the debt ceiling and budget cuts package passed by Congress last summer. A separate agreement took an additional $20 billion from the IRS over the next two years to divert to other non-defense programs.

Since then, the agency has tried to show how it is spending the money it has left, in hopes of stemming the cuts. New customer service improvements rolled out as the tax season began Jan. 29, and earlier this month the IRS announced that it had recouped half a billion dollars in back taxes from rich tax cheats.

Rep. Jason Smith, the Republican chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, said in a statement that the report "calls for even more IRS funding, uses pie-in-the-sky numbers, all without being straightforward about where the burdens of massive new enforcement efforts will fall." He said increased funding will inevitably result in hundreds of thousands of additional audits for taxpayers making less than $75,000.

After the IRA was signed into law, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen directed IRS leadership not to increase audit rates on people making less than $400,000 a year annually.

Ensuring that people actually pay their taxes is one of the tax collection agency's biggest challenges. The audit rate of millionaires fell by more than 70% from 2010 to 2019 and the audit rate on large corporations fell by more than 50%, Treasury's Deputy Assistant Secretary for Tax Analysis Greg Leiserson told reporters. IRA funding "is enabling the IRS to reverse this trend," Leiserson said.

The tax gap—which is the difference between taxes owed and taxes paid—has grown to more than $600 billion annually, according to the IRS.

Honda is recalling more than 750,000 cars to fix faulty passenger seat air bag sensor

DETROIT (AP)—Honda is recalling more than three quarters of a million vehicles in the U.S. because a faulty sensor may cause the front passenger air bags to inflate when they're not supposed to in a crash.

The recall covers certain Honda Pilot, Accord, Civic sedan, HR-V and Odyssey models from the 2020 through 2022 model years, as well as the 2020 Fit and Civic Coupe. Also included are the 2021 and 2022 Civic hatchback, the 2021 Civic Type R and Insight, and the 2020 and 2021 CR-V, CR-V Hybrid, Passport, Ridgeline and Accord Hybrid.

Affected models from the Acura luxury brand include the 2020 and 2022 MDX, the 2020 through 2022 RDX and the 2020 and 2021 TLX.

Documents posted Tuesday by the U.S. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration say that the front passenger seat weight sensor may crack and short circuit, and fail to turn off the air bag as intended. The sensors are required to disable the air bags if children or small adults are in the seats. If that doesn't happen, it increases the risk of injury.

Dealers will replace the seat sensors at no cost to owners. Owners will be notified starting March 18.

Honda says in documents that it has 3,834 warranty claims but no reports of injuries or deaths from the problem between June 30, 2020 and Jan. 19 of this year.

IT'S A MISMATCH ON ECONOMY

Inflation wanes, but voters still worry about getting by

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (AP)—Bartender Catey Regis had a pricey misadventure buying a used car recently—an experience that speaks to why voters are worrying about the U.S. economy going into this year's presidential election.

Over three years at Founders Brewing, the 25-year-old saved enough money pouring IPAs, stouts and porters to pay cash for a 2009 Toyota Corolla. But then the car's transmission went kaput and she had to take out a costly loan to fix it, and keep her toehold in the middle class.

"To me, it's a telltale sign about the economy," Regis explained from a bar stool after her shift. She plans to vote for President Joe Biden over Republican front-runner Donald Trump but, frankly, wishes there was someone else on the ballot.

By the numbers, the U.S. economy looks impressively strong. Growth surged 2.5% last year. Inflation has eased. Unemployment is a healthy 3.7%. Biden is telling voters that the numbers point to a brighter future, while Trump says the gains are merely the fumes of his time in office.

But conversations with dozens of voters around Grand Rapids—a city of 200,000 in one of Michigan's swing counties—show they're thinking about the economy through their own experiences. And they tell a story about an economy, a country and a world that seems to many to have spun out of control.

Most are sure the U.S. is in a recession. (It's not.) High grocery prices have them down. For renters, high home prices are putting the American dream out of reach. There is a sense of generational decline and more barriers to genuine financial security.

"The price of everything is going up and even though they are trying to raise the minimum wage, most people are getting paid the same," said 28-year-old Cameron Brown, who offered a rushed assessment as he hurried past outside Westwood Mall in suburban Kentwood. He said he'll vote for Trump because he "runs the country like a business."

There are multiple signs in economic reports that people's feelings about the economy have improved as inflation has eased after hitting a four-decade peak in the middle of 2022. People are finding ways to get by, even if few say they're getting ahead.

However, conversations with voters uncovered doubts about Biden's ability to fix the nation's challenges and concerns among some that Trump could make those challenges worse.

There's a persistent concern about a recession. Some voters worried about the fighting in the Middle East and Ukraine starting a third world war. Others saw the influx of migrants at the U.S. southern border as a threat to national security and a strain on government finances.

"I feel like there's a recession and I'm living it," says Scott Thompson, a 44-year-old Caledonia small business owner who drives for Uber on the side. "The cost of living, groceries, cereal, car insurance, and the equipment for my business is more expensive."

Thompson, who owns a telecom reseller, plans to vote for Trump in 2024. "I think Trump did a good job—no, he wasn't very presidential—but he did what he said he was going to do," Thompson said as he drove a fare to the mall.

Trump cut taxes for corporations and most households at the end of 2017, as well as imposing tariffs on Chinese imports and borrowing trillions of dollars for pandemic aid. The Biden administration kept the tariffs and launched another round of pandemic aid, as well as making substantial investments in infrastructure, manufacturing and renewable energy.

But Teresa Johnson worries about paying her $1,500 rent. Housing costs have been rising faster than overall inflation, a problem—compounded by higher mortgage rates—that has led more people to rent as prices have risen in the most desirable neighborhoods.

"The president needs to fix that," said Johnson, 62, a Black single parent in Kentwood who is a Democrat but open to backing Nikki Haley, the former South Carolina governor who is running against Trump for the Republican nomination.

The Biden administration has also sent conflicting messages in some cases to voters. Domestic oil production is at record highs, helping to keep down gasoline prices. But as part of the effort to combat climate change, Biden is also providing incentives to support the development of renewable energy and phase out fossil fuels.

Charles Kroll, CFO of a Grand Rapids fuel distribution company, stopped to chat after a recent local "state of business" event and said he's worried about the impact of Biden's climate policies—he calls it the president's "war on oil and gas." Kroll voted for Trump in 2016, Biden in 2020 and is undecided this time.

Grand Rapids is the seat of Kent County, which backed Trump in 2016 and then flipped to Biden in 2020. About 10% of the county's population is Black and more than 7% is multiracial, according to the Census Bureau. Nearly 40% of its population has a college degree. And of its college graduates, more than half are younger than 45—a population that has become an essential Democratic constituency.

But those voters' support of Biden is generally rooted in an opposition to Trump, who was impeached twice as president and since leaving office has been criminally indicted on an array of activities including the possession of classified material and efforts to overturn the 2020 election results.

Hyatt to celebrate Lunar New Year

To cherish prosperity, fortune, and health along the lunar calendar, Hyatt Regency Saipan will ring in the Lunar New Year with a traditional lion dance performed by dancers from the Saipan Chinese Association. The exciting event is scheduled at the hotel lobby on Saturday, Feb. 10, 2024 at 11am.

In addition, Hyatt Regency Saipan's Kili Café & Terrace will upgrade its breakfast buffet with traditional Asian highlights on Feb. 10 and 11 from 6:30am to 10am. The weekly Marianas Barbecue Dinner Buffet will equally offer popular Asian delights on Feb. 10 from 6am to 10pm and Giovanni's Sunday Brunch will also feature traditional Lunar New Year dishes from 11am to 2pm.

The newly re-opened Splash Bar at the Hyatt's poolside is ready to serve hotel guests and Saipan residents each Saturday and Sunday from 11:30am to 8pm.

Please join us with memorable moments when the lion dancers welcome the Year of the Dragon with plenty of photo opportunities for your social media. ***(Hyatt)***

HYATT

Hyatt Regency Saipan will celebrate the Lunar New Year this weekend starting with a lion dance performance at 11am at the hotel resort's lobby.

Nation

House vote to impeach Mayorkas fails, thwarted by Republican defections

WASHINGTON (AP)—In a dramatic setback, House Republicans failed Tuesday to impeach Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas, forced to shelve a high-profile priority—for now—after a few GOP lawmakers refused to go along with the party's plan.

Mayorkas

The stunning roll call fell just a single vote short of impeaching Mayorkas, stalling the Republicans' drive to punish the Biden administration over its handling of the U.S-Mexico border. With Democrats united against the charges, the Republicans needed almost every vote from their slim majority to approve the articles of impeachment.

A noisy, rowdy scene erupted on the House floor as the vote was tied for several tense minutes, 215-215. Several Republican lawmakers—led by the impeachment's chief sponsor, Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene of Georgia—surrounded one of the holdouts, Wisconsin Republican Mike Gallagher, who refused to change his vote.

With the tally stuck, Democrats shouted for the gavel to close out the vote.

"Frustrated," said Rep. Mark Green, R-Tenn., the chairman of the Homeland Security Committee, "but we'll see it back again."

House Speaker Mike Johnson's spokesman Raj Shah said they "fully intend" to reconsider the articles of impeachment against Mayorkas "when we have the votes for passage."

But next steps are uncertain. In the end, three Republicans opposed the impeachment, and a fourth Republican switched his vote so the measure could be revisited. The final tally was 214-216.

The outcome was another dismal result for the House Republicans who have repeatedly been unable to use their majority power to accomplish political goals, or even to keep up with the basics of governing.

Johnson, who could afford only a few defections from his ranks, had said earlier he had personally spoken to Gallagher and another GOP holdout, acknowledging the "heavy, heavy" vote as he sought their support.

"It's an extreme measure," said Johnson, R-La. "But extreme times call for extreme measures."

Not since 1876 has a Cabinet secretary faced impeachment charges and it's the first time a sitting secretary is being impeached—148 years ago, Secretary of War William Belknap resigned just before the vote.

The impeachment charges against Mayorkas come as border security is fast becoming a top political issue in the 2024 election, a particularly potent line of attack being leveled at President Joe Biden by Republicans, led by the party's front-runner for the presidential nomination, Donald Trump.

Record numbers of people have been arriving at the southern border, many fleeing countries around the world, in what Mayorkas calls an era of global migration. Many migrants are claiming asylum and being conditionally released into the U.S., arriving in cities that are underequipped to provide housing and other aid while they await judicial proceedings which can take years to determine whether they may remain.

The House Democrats united against the two articles of impeachment against Mayorkas, calling the proceedings a sham designed to please Trump, charges that do not rise to the Constitution's bar of treason, bribery or "high crimes and misdemeanors."

"A bunch of garbage," said Rep. Jim McGovern, D-Mass. He called Mayorkas "a good man, a decent man," who is simply trying to do his job.

Even if Republicans are able to impeach Mayorkas, he is not expected to be convicted in a Senate trial since Republican senators have been cool to the effort. The Senate could simply refer the matter to a committee for its own investigation, delaying immediate action.

"This baseless impeachment should never have moved forward," said Mia Ehrenberg, a spokesperson for the Department of Homeland Security.

If House Republicans are "serious about border security, they should abandon these political games," she said.

The impeachment of Mayorkas landed quickly onto the House agenda after Republican efforts to impeach Biden over the business dealings of his son, Hunter Biden, hit a lull, and the investigation into the Biden family dragged.

The Committee on Homeland Security under Chairman Green had been investigating the secretary for much of the past year, including probing the flow of deadly fentanyl into the U.S. But a resolution from Georgia Rep. Greene pushed it to the fore. The panel swiftly held a pair of hearings in January before announcing the two articles of impeachment against Mayorkas.

Unlike other moments in impeachment history, the afternoon's debate played out to an almost empty chamber, without the fervor or solemnity of past proceedings.

Greene, who was named to be one of the impeachment managers if there is a Senate trial, rose to blame Mayorkas for the "invasion" of migrants coming to the U.S.

Republican Rep. Eli Crane of Arizona said Mayorkas had committed a "dereliction of duty."

Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries said the Mayorkas impeachment vote was a stunt designed by Republicans to sow "chaos and confusion" and appease Trump—rather than to govern.

"No reasonable American can conclude that you're making life better for them by this sham impeachment," Jeffries said.

It was only as the roll call came to a standstill that the chamber burst into an angry, boisterous scene as tempers flared and the vote failed.

The three Republicans opposing impeachment were Gallagher, Rep. Ken Buck of Colorado and Tom McClintock of California. Republican Rep. Blake Moore of Utah was the Republican who switched his vote on procedural grounds.

At one point, Democratic Rep. Al Green of Texas, who had missed votes earlier in the day, arrived from the hospital to cast his vote against the impeachment. Green told NBC News that he had gone to the emergency room and had surgery.

McClintock, in a memo, said the charges "fail to identify an impeachable crime that Mayorkas has committed." He said the articles of impeachment from the committee explain the problems at the border under Biden's watch. But, he said, "they stretch and distort the Constitution."

Los Angeles records 475 mudslides during historic storm

LOS ANGELES (AP)—One of the wettest storms in Southern California history unleashed at least 475 mudslides in the Los Angeles area after dumping more than half the amount of rainfall the city typically gets in a season in just two days, and officials warned Tuesday that the threat was not over yet.

"Our hillsides are already saturated. So even not-very-heavy rains could still lead to additional mudslides," Mayor Karen Bass said during an evening news conference. "Even when the rain stops, the ground may continue to shift."

Officials expressed relief that the storm hadn't yet killed anyone or caused a major catastrophe in Los Angeles despite its size and intensity, with nearly 400 trees toppling. There were seven deaths reported elsewhere, including several people crushed by fallen trees in Northern California. Someone trying to enter the United States was swept up by a swollen Tijuana River channel and died early Tuesday as the California-Mexico border, according to U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

AP

Workers survey a mudslide Tuesday, Feb. 6, 2024, in the Beverly Crest area of Los Angeles.

Though the rain was tapering off, forecasters extended a flood watch through early Wednesday, warning the ground was too filled with water to hold much more after back-to-back atmospheric rivers walloped California in less than a week. Another heavy burst of rain is expected Wednesday evening before the region begins to dry out, said Tyler Kranz, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service.

Bass said the city is now looking toward recovery and will seek federal aid including emergency vouchers for homeless people in shelters. It may see if it can qualify for FEMA money to help people whose homes were damaged in hillside communities where insurance companies won't cover. How many they are could take a while to count.

As of Tuesday, seven buildings had been deemed uninhabitable, officials said. Another 10 buildings were yellow-tagged, meaning residents could go back to get their belongings but could not stay there because of the damage.

"Hopefully no more homes will be damaged, but it's too early to tell," Bass said.

The 'none of these candidates' option wins Nevada GOP primary

LAS VEGAS (AP)—The "none of these candidates" option has won in Nevada's symbolic Republican presidential primary contest, an embarrassing result for Nikki Haley, who was the only major candidate on the ballot.

The former U.N. ambassador opted to compete in the state-run primary election Tuesday instead of the party's presidential caucuses, the only contest in the state that awards delegates toward the nomination. Former President Donald Trump is the only major candidate competing in the caucuses on Thursday and will likely sweep the state's Republican delegates as a result.

Utilizing a quirk of Nevada election law, more voters on Tuesday marked their primary ballots for "none of these candidates" than cast their votes for Haley.

Haley had said beforehand she was going to "focus on the states that are fair" and did not campaign in the western state in the weeks leading up to the caucuses. Her campaign wrote off the primary results with a reference to Nevada's famous casino industry.

"Even Donald Trump knows that when you play penny slots the house wins," spokeswoman Olivia Perez-Cubas said. "We didn't bother to play a game rigged for Trump. We're full steam ahead in South Carolina and beyond."

Nevada Gov. Joe Lombardo, a Republican, had announced beforehand that he would vote for "none of these candidates" on Tuesday. Several Republicans interviewed heading to the polls said they intended to do the same.

Washoe County Republican Party Chair Bruce Parks, who pushed for the GOP to hold caucuses, said that he told voters who called his office—and Trump supporters—to participate in the primary by voting for "none of these candidates" over Haley.

"They basically told us they don't care about us," Parks said in an interview after the race was called. "By marking 'none of these candidates,' we respond in kind—we don't care about you either."

There was also a Democratic primary on Tuesday that President Joe Biden easily won against author Marianne Williamson and a handful of less-known challengers. Rep. Dean Phillips of Minnesota was not on the ballot.

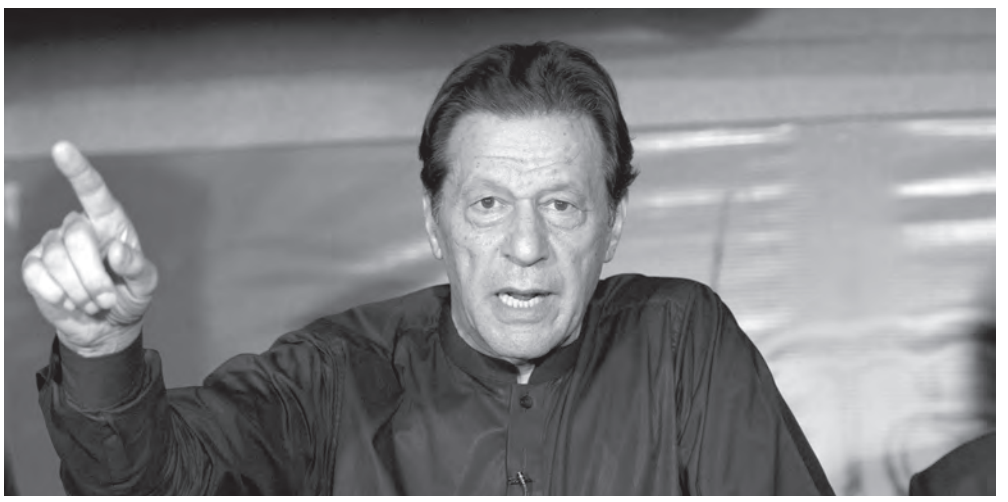
Haley's campaign balked at the $55,000 fee the Nevada GOP was charging candidates to participate in the caucuses.

"We have not spent a dime nor an ounce of energy on Nevada. We made the decision early on that we were not going to pay $55,000 to a Trump entity to participate in a process that is rigged for Trump," Haley campaign manager Betsy Ankney told reporters on Monday. "Nevada is not and has not been our focus."

Asia

UN RIGHTS BODY WARNS

‘Pattern of harassment’ vs Khan party ahead of polls



AP

Pakistan’s former Prime Minister Imran Khan speaks during a news conference at his home, in Lahore, Pakistan, Thursday, May 18, 2023.

ISLAMABAD (AP)—The United Nation’s top human rights body warned Tuesday of a “pattern of harassment” against members of former Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan’s party ahead of this week’s parliamentary election.

During a news briefing in Geneva, Liz Throssell, spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, urged Pakistani authorities to ensure a fully free and fair voting process.

This came amid complaints by Khan’s Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party of harassment and the inability to hold rallies similar to the former ruling party and its candidate Nawaz Sharif. Authorities have denied such claims.

Khan has been sentenced to 34 years in jail after being convicted in four cases and has been disqualified from running. His party and supporters claimed the sentencing was a punishment for his rhetoric against Pakistan’s powerful military.

Throssell said the U.N.’s rights body was disturbed “by the pattern of harassment, arrests and prolonged detentions of leaders” of Khan’s party and its supporters.

She said all eligible parties in Pakistan must be able to compete fairly.

“Ahead of Thursday’s parliamentary election in Pakistan, we deplore all acts of violence against political parties and candidates, and urge the authorities to uphold the fundamental freedoms necessary for an inclusive and meaningful democratic process,” she said.

She said the upcoming elections are also a “reminder of the barriers faced by women and minority communities in Pakistan, particularly the Ahmadis.”

Pakistan declared the Ahmadis non-Muslims in 1974, they are recorded on separate voter rolls from other citizens. Throssell said that these separate voter lists exposes them to violence.

Cambodia PM in Thailand to renew ties

Manet

BANGKOK (AP)—Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet arrived Wednesday in Thailand’s capital on his first official visit since becoming his country’s leader last year, seeking to renew the close ties the two countries have maintained in recent times.

In addition to meeting with his Thai counterpart, Srettha Thavisin, Hun Manet is slated to have a royal audience with King Maha Vajiralongkorn, preside over the signing of several documents on bilateral cooperation and address a Thailand-Cambodia business forum.

Hun Manet’s scheduled one-day visit “is an important opportunity for both countries to further strengthen the bilateral cooperation, especially in the economic development of border areas, promotion of two-way trade and investment, closer transportation connectivity, tourism cooperation as well as fostering closer ties between the peoples of the two kingdoms,” the Thai Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

Cambodian government spokesperson Pen Bona said Hun Manet’s visit would reaffirm the close relationship for peace, development and cooperation established by his father and predecessor, Hun Sen. Hun Sen stepped down as prime minister last year after 38 years in power, including periods of tensions with Thailand, especially over territorial disputes.

Sri Lankan Cabinet minister resigns after arrest in a fake drugs scandal

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka (AP)—A Sri Lankan Cabinet minister has resigned after being arrested in a scandal over the government’s alleged purchase of counterfeit drugs during the country’s economic crisis.

A government statement Tuesday confirmed that Environment Minister Keheliya Rambukwella, who previously served as health minister, has resigned. He was arrested on Friday for alleged involvement in the procurement of counterfeit intravenous human immunoglobulin, which is used to help fight infections and cancer, and was ordered held for investigation until Feb. 15.

His resignation follows mounting pressure from opposition lawmakers, activists and health groups for him to be removed and for a transparent investigation to be held into the scandal.

Five other senior Health Ministry officials and the supplier of the alleged counterfeit drugs have also been arrested.

Rambukwella is accused of using the economic crisis as a pretext to bypass the usual tender process in purchasing many types of medicine and allegedly favor a particular supplier.

World

Chile wildfire deaths reach 131

More than 300 people are missing

VIÑA DEL MAR, Chile (AP)—The death toll from wildfires that ravaged central Chile for several days increased to 131 on Tuesday, and more than 300 people were still missing as the blazes appeared to be burning themselves out.

The fires in Valparaiso are said to be Chile’s deadliest disaster since an earthquake in 2010. Officials have suggested that some could have been intentionally set.

President Gabriel Boric during a visit to the region announced that furniture used for the 2023 Pan American Games will be donated to victims. He said the government also will forgive the water bills for 9,200 affected homes.

The fires began Friday on the mountainous eastern edge of Viña del Mar, a beach resort known for a festival that attracts the best in Latin music. Two other towns, Quilpé and Villa Alemana, also were hit hard as the fires spread quickly in dry weather and strong winds.

The Viña del Mar Festival canceled its opening gala as a sign of mourning. Many participating singers including Alejandro Sanz, Pablo Alborán and Maná sent messages of solidarity and announced donations.

Chile’s Forensic Medical Service has said many bodies recovered from the fires were in bad condition and difficult to identify, but forensic workers would take samples of genetic material from people reporting missing relatives.

“My parents’ and my sisters’ house burned, and my neighbors—the people who knew me when I was little—died,” said Gabriel Leiva, 46, going through debris in Viña del Mar. He said his neighbors were “family that is not of blood but of the heart.”

The United Nations in a statement offered its condolences and announced assistance. Meanwhile, Boric, in a tweet, thanked U.S. President Joe Biden for “his important support” following the disaster.

Gaza parents desperate for diapers, formula

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP)—Zainab al-Zein was forced to make a desperate decision: Feed her infant daughter solid foods that her tiny body may not be able to digest or watch her starve because of a lack of baby formula in the besieged Gaza Strip.

Al-Zein chose to give 2 1/2-month-old Linda solids, knowing the choice could lead to health issues.

“I know we are doing something harmful to her, but there is nothing,” said al-Zein, feeding her wailing daughter crushed biscuits in the cold tent they now call home. “She cries and cries continuously.”

The war between Israel and Gaza’s Hamas rulers has sparked a humanitarian catastrophe that has brought shortages of the most basic necessities. Some of the hardest-hit are babies, young children and their parents, with diapers and formula either hard to find or spiking to unaffordable prices, leading parents to look to inadequate or even unsafe alternatives.

Their plight is further complicated due to sporadic aid deliveries that have been hobbled by Israeli restrictions and the relentless fighting.

Displaced Palestinians are also being squeezed into ever tighter areas of the tiny coastal enclave, prompting the outbreak of illness and disease, to which malnourished children are particularly vulnerable. The U.N. says the population is under imminent risk of famine, with a quarter of people already starving.

For Palestinians enduring increasingly dire conditions, the most basic of acts—such as changing a child’s diaper—have become a luxury that can require acrifice.

“I sold my children’s food so I can buy diapers,” said Raafat Abu Wardeh, who has two children in diapers.

WORLD BRIEFS

Yemen’s Houthi rebels target 2 ships in Red Sea, Gulf of Aden with ballistic missiles

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP)—Two ships traveling in Middle East waters were targeted by Yemen Houthi rebel ballistic missile fire early Tuesday, authorities said, in the latest assaults in the Iranian-backed fighters’ campaign of targeting vessels over Israel’s war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip. The first attack happened in the southern part of the Red Sea, west of the Yemeni port of Hodeida, with the projectile causing “slight damage” to the Barbados-flagged, United Kingdom-owned cargo ship Morning Tide’s bridge windows, the British military’s United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations said. A small vessel had been nearby the ship before the attack, it added. The Houthis carried out the attack using three anti-ship ballistic missiles, the United States military’s Central Command said early Wednesday.

Hyenas kill 1 person and injure 2 near Kenyan university, where students say they don’t feel safe

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP)—Marauding hyenas killed a man and wounded two people near a university outside the Kenyan capital, officials said Tuesday, prompting hundreds of students from the school to block streets to protest what they called a lack of security. One of the wounded was a student at Kenya’s Multimedia University who was attacked by the hyenas late Monday on a road that borders the Nairobi National Park in Ongata Rongai. Students from the university disrupted traffic there Tuesday as police used tear gas to disperse them. “The university is not safe because we are near the national park,” said Ochieng Kefah, a student at Multimedia University, who was among the protesters. “The government should, maybe, put some restrictions on the movement of the animals.” The injured student was identified as 21-year-old engineering student Kevin Mwendwa, who lost a thumb in the attack.

Syria says Israeli airstrikes over Homs have killed and wounded civilians

DAMASCUS, Syria (AP)—Israeli airstrikes over the central city of Homs and its countryside late Tuesday killed and wounded civilians, the Syrian military said. There was no immediate comment from Israel. Syrian state news agency SANA quoted an unnamed military official early Wednesday saying the strikes damaged both private and public property, without giving additional details. The Israeli jets reportedly struck the Syrian city and countryside from over the Mediterranean Sea near the Lebanese coastal city of Tripoli. The strikes come as tensions across the Middle East flare with the Israeli-Hamas war and a drone attack on Sunday that killed three U.S. troops and injured dozens more in northeastern Jordan, near the Syrian border.

Environment

AP
Jewell Baggett walks amidst debris strewn across the yard where her mother's home had stood, as she searches for anything salvageable in Horseshoe Beach, Fla., after the passage of Hurricane Idalia, Aug. 30, 2023.

DIAL IT UP TO CATEGORY 6?

As warming stokes storms, some want BIGGER HURRICANE CATEGORY

By SETH BORENSTEIN
AP Science Writer

A handful of super powerful tropical storms in the last decade and the prospect of more to come has a couple of experts proposing a new category of whopper hurricanes: Category 6.

Studies have shown that the strongest tropical storms are getting more intense because of climate change. So the traditional five-category Saffir-Simpson scale, developed more than 50 years ago, may not show the true power of the most muscular storms, two climate scientists suggest in a Monday study in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. They propose a sixth category for storms with winds that exceed 192 miles per hour (309 kilometers per hour).

Currently, storms with winds of 157 mph (252 kilometers per hour) or higher are Category 5. The study's authors said that open-ended grouping doesn't warn people enough about the higher dangers from monstrous storms that flirt with 200 mph (322 kph) or higher.

Several experts told The Associated Press they don't think another category is necessary. They said it could even give the wrong signal to the public because it's based on wind speed, while water is by far the deadliest killer in hurricanes.

Since 2013, five storms — all in the Pacific — had winds of 192 mph or higher that would have put them in the new category, with two hitting the Philippines. As the world warms, conditions grow more ripe for such whopper storms, including in the Gulf of Mexico, where many storms that hit the United States get stronger, the study authors said.

"Climate change is making the worst storms worse," said study lead author Michael Wehner, a climate scientist at the Lawrence Berkley National Lab.

It's not that there are more storms because of climate change. But the strongest are more intense. The proportion of major hurricanes among all storms is increasing and it's because of warmer oceans, said University of Miami hurricane researcher Brian McNoldy, who wasn't part of the research.

From time to time, experts have proposed a Category 6, especially since Typhoon Haiyan reached 195 mph wind speeds (315 kilometers per hour) over the open Pacific. But Haiyan "does not appear to be an isolated case," the study said.

Storms of sufficient wind speed are called hurricanes if they form east of the international dateline, and typhoons if they form to the west of the line. They're known as cyclones in the Indian Ocean and Australia.

The five storms that hit 192 mph winds or more are:

■ 2013's Haiyan, which killed more than 6,300 people in the Philippines.

■ 2015's Hurricane Patricia, which hit 215 mph (346 kph) before weakening and hitting Jalisco, Mexico.

■ 2016's Typhoon Meranti, which reached 195 mph before skirting the Philippines and Taiwan and making landfall in China.

■ 2020's Typhoon Goni, which reached 195 mph before killing dozens in the Philippines as a weaker storm.

■ 2021's Typhoon Surigae, which also reached 195 mph before weakening and skirting several parts of Asia and Russia.

If the world sticks with just five storm categories "as these storms get stronger and stronger it will more and more underestimate the potential risk," said study co-author Jim Kossin, a former NOAA climate and hurricane researcher now with First Street Foundation.

Pacific storms are stronger because there's less land to weaken them and more room for storms to grow more intense, unlike the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean, Kossin said.

CLIMATE GLIMPSE

Fires in Chile, California rains, Spain drought spread pain of weather extremes

Camila Lange, who is 7-months-pregnant, on Monday sat with her husband and dog in what used to be their home in Vina del Mar, Chile. Hundreds of homes in the central coastal area of the South American nation have been destroyed in fires that have killed at least 112 people.

Weather and climate extremes—wildfire, drought and flooding—are taking a toll around the world. Here's some of what's happening now.

■ In Chile, firefighters are battling huge forest fires stoked by hot and dry conditions. The fires are burning with the highest intensity around the city of Vina del Mar, where a famous botanical garden founded in 1931 was destroyed by flames. Several neighborhoods on the eastern edge of the popular beach resort of 300,000 people were devoured by flames and smoke, trapping some people in their homes.

■ In California, the second of back-to-back moisture-packed atmospheric rivers is taking aim at Southern California, unleashing mudslides, flooding roadways and knocking out power to about 1.4 million people in the Los Angeles area. Up to 9 inches (23 centimeters) of rain had already fallen by Monday, with more expected, according to the National Weather Service.

In Northern California, the storm inundated streets and brought down trees and electrical lines Sunday across the San Francisco Bay Area, where winds topped 60 mph (96 kph) in places.

AP
Camila Lange, who is 7-months-pregnant, and her husband Felipe Corvalan sit with their dog Florencia inside their home that was burned by a deadly wildfire in Vina del Mar, Chile, Monday, Feb. 5, 2024.

■ In Spain, people have been struggling to find drinking water as the country tries to cope with a record drought. Officials in the northeast region of Catalonia declared a drought emergency on Thursday, with reservoirs that serve 6 million people, including the population of Barcelona, at under 16% of their capacity, a historic low.

■ Meanwhile, some scientists say that studying Caribbean sea sponges, which can live hundreds of years, is leading them to theorize that the world may have warmed more than generally thought since pre-Industrial times.

■ Finally, does the prospect of increasingly powerful tropical storms mean we need a new category to describe their intensity? Some experts say we do and are proposing a Category 6 for hurricanes that exceed 192 miles per hour (309 kilometers per hour).

■■■

"We are entering a new climate reality. It is more than likely we will see more droughts that will be both more intense and more frequent."—regional president Pere Aragonès on announcing a drought emergency in Catalonia, Spain. ***(AP)***

Life & Style

Toby Keith, country singer-songwriter, dies at 62 after stomach cancer diagnosis

By KRISTIN M. HALL
AP ENTERTAINMENT WRITER

Toby Keith, a hit country crafter of pro-American anthems who both riled up critics and was loved by millions of fans, has died. He was 62.

The "Should've Been a Cowboy" singer-songwriter, who had stomach cancer, died peacefully Monday surrounded by his family, according to a statement posted on the country singer's website. "He fought his fight with grace and courage," the statement said. He announced his cancer diagnosis in 2022.

Keith

The 6-foot-4 singer broke out in the country boom years of the 1990s, writing songs that fans loved to hear. Over his career he publicly clashed with other celebrities and journalists and often pushed back against record executives who wanted to smooth his rough edges.

He was known for his overt patriotism on post 9/11 songs like "Courtesy of the Red, White and Blue," and boisterous barroom tunes like "I Love This Bar" and "Red Solo Cup." He had a powerful booming voice, a tongue-in-cheek sense of humor and range that carried love songs as well as drinking songs.

Among his 20 No. 1 Billboard hits were "How Do You Like Me Now?!," "As Good As I Once Was," "My List" and "Beer for My Horses," a duet with Willie Nelson. His influences were other working class songwriters like Merle Haggard and he tallied more than 60 singles on the Hot Country chart over his career.

Throughout the cancer treatments, Keith continued to perform, most recently playing in Las Vegas in December. He also performed on the People's Choice Country Awards in 2023 as he sang his song "Don't Let the Old Man In."

"Cancer is a roller coaster," he told KWTV during an interview aired last month. "You just sit here and wait on it to go away. It might never go away."

Keith worked as a roughneck in the oil fields of Oklahoma as a young man, then played semi-pro football before launching his career as a singer.

"I write about life, and I sing about life, and I don't overanalyze things," Keith told The Associated Press in 2001, following the success of his song "I'm Just Talking About Tonight."

Keith learned good lessons in the booming oil fields, which toughened him up, but also showed him the value of money.

Actor Gina Carano sues over her firing from 'The Mandalorian'

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Actor Gina Carano on Tuesday sued Lucasfilm and its parent The Walt Disney Co. over her 2021 firing from " The Mandalorian," saying she was let go for expressing right-wing views on social media.

Carano

The lawsuit Carano filed with help from X, formerly Twitter, in federal court in California alleges her wrongful termination from the " Star Wars " galaxy Disney+ streaming series after two seasons over a post likening the treatment of American conservatives to the treatment of Jews in Nazi Germany.

"A short time ago in a galaxy not so far away, Defendants made it clear that only one orthodoxy in thought, speech, or action was acceptable in their empire, and that those who dared to question or failed to fully comply would not be tolerated," the lawsuit opens. "Carano was terminated from her role as swiftly as her character's peaceful home planet of Alderaan had been destroyed by the Death Star."

The lawsuit alleges she was fired because she "dared voice her own opinions" against an "online bully mob who demanded her compliance with their extreme progressive ideology."

SHOWBIZ TIDBITS

Annette Bening honored as Harvard's Hasty Pudding Woman of the Year

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. (AP)—Annette Bening, a two-time Golden Globe winner who recently received her fifth Oscar nomination, was feted Tuesday with a raucous parade full of colorful costumes and drag performers as part of festivities honoring her as Harvard University's Hasty Pudding Theatricals 2024 Woman of the Year. A few hours later, Benning endured a celebrity roast before attending a performance of the Hasty Pudding Theatricals' 175th production, "Heist Heist Baby." She joined a group of synchronized swimmers on stage doing swim strokes to the song "Pump Up the Jams," a reference to her role in the swimming movie "Nyad." Then, she cut the hair of a volunteer in an effort to give him her signature look. And then she donned a seagull costume and acted out the role of the sea bird, a reference her role in the movie version of Anton Chekhov's "The Seagull," squawking and waving her arms. "I did it all myself with no one's help," Benning joked, after accepting the traditional pudding pot and trying to start a speech by thanking her kindergarten teacher. Her husband, Warren Beatty, won the man of the year award in 1975.

Ukrainian-born Miss Japan gives up her title after an article reveals her affair with a married man

TOKYO (AP)—The Ukrainian-born winner of this year's Miss Japan beauty pageant and the contest's organizers say she has renounced her title after a magazine published an article about her affair with a married man. Karolina Shiino was crowned Miss Japan on Jan. 22, setting off renewed public debate over what it means to be Japanese in a country where homogeneity and conformity are still valued. In a message posted on Instagram on Monday, Shiino said that after the article came out, she offered to give up her crown and resign from her modeling agency. She said her offers were accepted. The Associated Press could not immediately reach Shiino for comment.

Killer Mike says arrest at Grammys stems from altercation with an 'over-zealous' security guard

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Killer Mike says an "over-zealous" security guard contributed to the physical altercation that led to his arrest after the rapper and activist won three awards at the Grammys. "As you can imagine, there was a lot going and there was some confusion around which door my team and I should enter," Mike said in statement Tuesday. "We experienced an over-zealous security guard but my team and I have the upmost confidence that I will ultimately be cleared of all wrongdoing." On Sunday, Mike was escorted in handcuffs by Los Angeles police at Crypto.com Arena after joyous moments for him at the Grammys' Premiere Ceremony, where he won his awards in quick succession. He had won his first Grammy in more than two decades. Police said Mike was detained after the altercation and booked on a misdemeanor.

The rapper, whose real name is Michael Render, was released Sunday evening on his own recognizance. He is scheduled to appear in court on Feb. 29 in Los Angeles.

Crewmember dies in accident on set of Marvel's 'Wonder Man'

STUDIO CITY, Calif. (AP)—A crewmember who was working on the Marvel Studios series "Wonder Man" died following an accident on set Tuesday morning at CBS Radford Studios in Studio City. The man, whose name was not made public, was a rigger who fell from the rafters, according to the trade publication Deadline, which first reported the news. "Our thoughts and deepest condolences are with his family and friends, and our support is behind the investigation into the circumstances of this accident," a Marvel spokesperson said in a statement. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration, or OSHA, will be the investigating body.

ESPN, Fox, Warner Bros. Discovery are planning a sports streaming platform in the fall

ESPN, Fox and Warner Bros. Discovery announced plans on Tuesday to launch a sports streaming platform in the fall that will include offerings from at least 15 networks and all four major professional sports leagues. A one-stop app to view most sports should be a welcome sight for fans, who continue to navigate rising costs by subscribing to multiple services. Kevin Krim, the president and CEO of the ad measurement firm EDO, compared the three companies teaming up for sports like what some networks did when Hulu started in 2008. "My sense is knowing the cast of characters, they're looking at the original Hulu concept and thinking, 'Well, that worked out really well for us.' So let's do that again. But for live sports streaming," he said. ***(AP)***

Child-rearing philosophies clash in new relationship

DEAR ABBY: I have been in a relationship for more than a year. We met at the gym. We have similar interests and are both normally caring and loving to each other. We also have similar senses of humor.

We moved in together too quickly, after only six months. Our attempt at blending our kids and families has hit a lot of hard bumps. He is a very assertive and aggressive parent, while I'm the opposite. He has helped me with pointers and advice on taming my two boys' "attitudes," and both have changed the attitudes they had before and are doing good.

The problem is, my boyfriend has become controlling to the point that when anyone seems a little disrespectful or doesn't do what they were supposed to or told to do, he gets in the middle of it. When we have an argument, if we disagree on something, he curses at me or calls me names. This has become a dealbreaker for me. He says I spoil and coddle my kids, which is a dealbreaker for him. He always apologizes afterward, but then he does it again. This may seem obvious, but is this as clear as I'm thinking that we should break up?

SOMEWHAT HOPELESS

DEAR SOMEWHAT HOPELESS: Because your "gentleman" (I use the term advisedly) friend becomes verbally abusive when you have a disagreement, recognize that he continues to do it because it works for him. The example his behavior has set for your boys is atrocious. I'm pleased that you are thinking as clearly as you have been. Offer him the option of couples counseling. If he refuses, for your kids' sakes if not for your own, move out and move on. The person you're involved with isn't just "aggressive" as much as he is a bully.

■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: My brother, who is 48, has mental issues. I have always tried to be there for him as much as I could without interfering with his independence. Although he is antisocial, he isn't dangerous to anyone. He has low self-esteem and takes things literally.

My parents have always been emotionally detached, but my brother has always craved Dad's acceptance. Because he felt that Dad favored me, he pushes me away and isolates himself. I have tried to stay in contact, and if I see him at the store, I speak to him, but he is so full of anger. Should I keep trying even though it's painful? I have tried telling him how I feel about the situation, but he lives in his own little world and can't relate to my feelings. I just worry that if he were to pass, I would feel guilty for not trying harder, but he makes it so difficult and painful.

FACING OBSTACLES IN PENNSYLVANIA

DEAR FACING OBSTACLES: You are a good sister. But for your brother's sake as well as your own, it may be time to distance yourself emotionally from his mental problems. He may treat you the way he does because he is incapable of interpersonal relations, not because of anything you did or didn't do. Because you would feel guilty if you disengaged entirely, contact your brother every six or eight weeks or so to check in. If you encounter him in a store, be polite. If he's angry or belligerent, back off, continue your shopping or leave. Please don't take this as personally as you have. Your brother is unwell. YOU CAN'T FIX WHAT'S WRONG WITH HIM. Follow your conscience, which is more than your parents have been doing—and forgive yourself for not being able to do more.

■ ■ ■

To receive a collection of Abby's most memorable – and most frequently requested – poems and essays, send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby – Keepers Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

DEAR ABBY

By Abigail Van Buren
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson

HERE'S THE LATEST POLL ON YOUR PERFORMANCE AS DAD. YOUR APPROVAL RATING IS PRETTY LOW, I'M AFRAID.
THAT'S BECAUSE THERE'S NOT NECESSARILY ANY CONNECTION BETWEEN WHAT'S GOOD AND WHAT'S POPULAR. I DO WHAT'S RIGHT, NOT WHAT GETS APPROVAL.
YOU'LL NEVER KEEP THE JOB WITH THAT ATTITUDE.
IF SOMEONE ELSE OFFERS TO DO IT, LET ME KNOW.

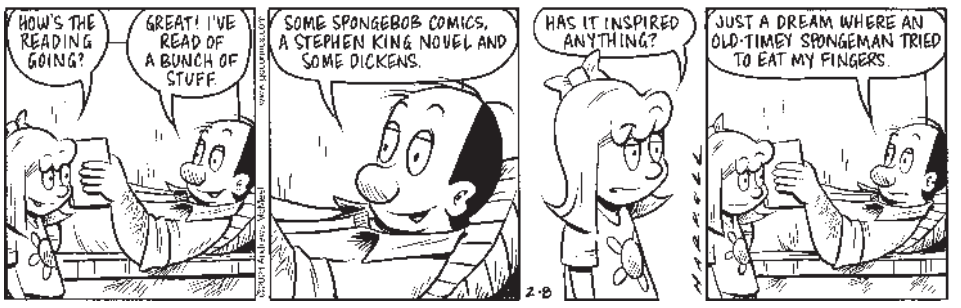
Garfield®

By Jim Davis

I LIKE GLAZED, BUT THE CHOCOLATE IS GOOD, TOO. OOH, AND I LOVE JELLY-FILLED! IT'S JUST SO HARD TO DECIDE!
SNARF
PROBLEM SOLVED
JIM DAVIS 2-8

Adam@home

By Bryan Basset


HOW'S THE READING GOING?
GREAT! I'VE READ OF A BUNCH OF STUFF.
SOME SPONGEBOB COMICS, A STEPHEN KING NOVEL AND SOME DICKENS.
HAS IT INSPIRED ANYTHING?
JUST A DREAM WHERE AN OLD-TIMEY SPONGEMAN TRIED TO EAT MY FINGERS.

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy

I FOUND A BUNCH OF OLD MOVIES IN THE BASEMENT.
THESE WERE CHECKED OUT TEN YEARS AGO. WE NEED TO RETURN THEM TO BLOCKBUSTER.
PUT THEM OUT ON THE PORCH NEXT TO MY GREAT-GRANDMA'S EMPTY MILK BOTTLES.

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Sty chow
5 Male swan
8 Guitarist Atkins
12 Watch reading
13 Year in Mexico
14 Top-notch
15 Winged
16 Nanny's charge
17 Un-dressed
18 Runway surface
20 River of New York
22 "Kinda" suffix
23 Actress Saldaña
24 Has to
27 Surround
32 Select, with "for"
33 "Angie" actor
34 Fine, at NASA
35 Small monkey
38 Eyelid woe
39 Bond rating
40 Candle count
42 Secret meetings
45 Olivia of "The Crown"
49 Texas city
50 "The Sopra-nos" airer
52 Gambling game
53 Tehran's country
54 Stately tree
55 Craving
56 Brooklyn NBA team
57 Name
58 Canadian gas brand

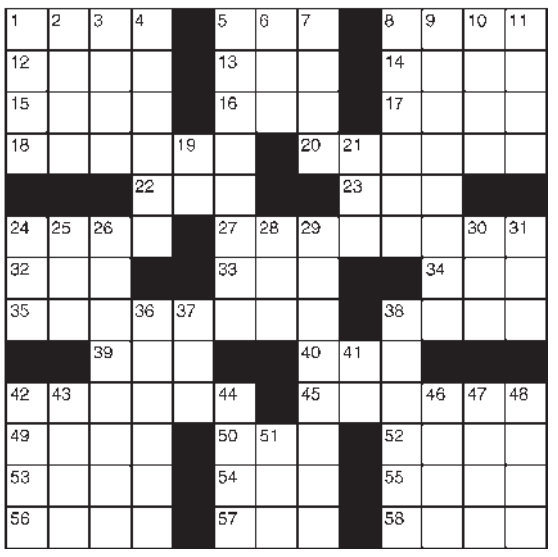
DOWN

1 RBI, for one
2 Country singer McCann
3 Epps of "This Is Us"
4 Allow
5 Ballpark figures
6 Musician Yoko
7 The pair
8 Straight talk
9 Purring pet
10 Within (Pref.)
11 Adoles-cent
19 While
21 Subma-chine gun
24 Off-tattooed word
25 "— Lazy River"
26 Alley meower
28 Formerly known as
29 Under-ground cemetery
30 Myrna of film
31 Squeeze (out)
36 Brick workers
37 Granola grain
38 Arm's-length portrait
41 "Monop-oly" corner
42 Clone
43 Excep-tional
44 Molt
46 Gym pads
47 Curved lines
48 Big Apple neighbor-hood
51 — -ray Disc

Solution time: 24 mins.

M	A	R	A	■	A	N	G	■	P	F	C	S
Γ	C	O	I	■	M	O	A	■	I	A	O	S
S	L	O	W	D	O	W	N	■	E	S	P	N
H	U	M	A	N	■	■	G	R	A	T	E	S
■	■	■	Y	A	M	S	■	U	S	B	■	■
A	R	F	S	■	C	W	E	D	■	A	S	H
A	K	A	■	S	M	O	K	E	■	L	E	M
S	O	S	■	H	A	R	E	■	S	L	I	M
■	■	I	A	O	■	L	S	I	L	■	■	■
S	O	F	I	E	R	■	■	O	A	S	I	S
A	B	O	O	■	S	I	O	W	I	A	N	F
I	O	O	M	■	V	F	F	■	F	T	T	F
K	E	D	S	■	P	A	D	■	R	E	O	S

Yesterday's answer 2-8



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955!** 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Seth Green, 50; Mary Steenburgen, 71; Robert Klein, 82; Nick Nolte, 83.

Happy Birthday: Chill, rethink your strategy, consider what you enjoy doing most and make your long-term goal meaningful. Taking a simple approach to life and relationships and being honest regarding what's next for you will help you enforce the changes that will honor your dreams, hopes and wishes. Don't sit idle or let anyone step in and take over. Be the master of your destiny and decide what's best for you. Your numbers are 5, 16, 20, 28, 34, 39, 47.

ARIES *(March 21-April 19)*: Donate time to a cause and make a difference. The people you encounter along the way will become an excellent sounding board when you come to a challenge. Look for a cost-efficient way to reach your objective. Don't put yourself at risk physically or financially. ✪✪✪✪

TAURUS *(April 20-May 20)*: Concentrate on what you can accomplish instead of watching the competition. Trust and believe in yourself and your ability to do your best. Someone will use intimidation tactics to throw you off your game. Be brave and forge ahead with confidence. Self-improvement is favored. ✪✪

GEMINI *(May 21-June 20)*: Reunite with old friends. Establish what's essential and research how to manufacture the changes necessary to reach your goal. Getting educated, networking and reaching out to an expert will save you time getting to your destination of choice. Don't buy into someone else's dream; create your own. ✪✪✪✪✪

CANCER *(June 21-July 22)*: Step outside your comfort zone and do something unusual. Giving yourself a chance to let your creativity seep into what you do personally and professionally will draw positive attention to valued suggestions and make your day and life productive and rewarding. ✪✪✪

LEO *(July 23-Aug. 22)*: Don't misinterpret what others do or say. When you doubt someone, ask questions. Concentrate on something you feel passionate about. Strive for personal growth and satisfaction. Own the spotlight and seize the moment. ✪✪✪

VIRGO *(Aug. 23-Sept. 22)*: Don't overthink your next move. Look at the facts, consider what you can contribute and avoid ventures that rely on others to become successful. It will require hands-on effort and energy if you want to get ahead and cross the finish line. ✪✪✪

LIBRA *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22)*: Stifle anger and let intelligence take you to a better place. Don't consider joint ventures, update documents before late fees occur and don't rely on others to take care of matters for you. A mental challenge will enlighten you and attract someone of interest. ✪✪✪✪✪

SCORPIO *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21)*: Don't overthink your next move. Consider what's popular and how to apply your experience, knowledge and skills, and take advantage of the buzz. Your relationships will undergo a shift due to heading in different directions. Don't slow down; do what's best for you. ✪✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21)*: Take what's yours and use it to your advantage. Whether you want to sell off what you no longer use or invest in yourself, update your skills or learn something new, you can position yourself for success if you follow proper protocol. Change is favored. ✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

COPYRIGHT 2007 UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

CAPRICORN *(Dec. 22-Jan. 19)*: Nothing is impossible if you structure your plans, react quickly and maintain a financial plan. Domestic projects will require creative budgeting to accommodate hidden costs. Refuse to be blinded by the latest and greatest gadgets when a simple solution is good enough. ✪✪✪

AQUARIUS *(Jan. 20-Feb. 18)*: Don't sign up for something you don't want. Be realistic, take control and make the most of your time. Eliminate what's no longer challenging or essential to you. Once you clear your mind and schedule, you can participate in what makes you happy. ✪✪✪

PISCES *(Feb. 19-March 20)*: Play to win. Join forces with people you can rely on to do their share. Let your uniqueness shine through, motivating others to do their best. Take a leadership position, share the credit and explore possibilities. Romance is on the rise. ✪✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are demonstrative, ambitious and challenging. You are persistent and playful.

✪: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ✪✪: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ✪✪✪: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ✪✪✪✪: Aim high; start new projects. ✪✪✪✪✪: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

5	7			2		4	8	1
					1			
			8					3
7			2	5			1	
8	5	2						
		1			7	8		
2	6	7				1		4
	9	5		4		2		
				9		6	7	5

Difficulty: ★★★ 2/8

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's Answer

9	8	4	5	7	2	6	1	3
7	5	1	3	9	6	4	2	8
2	6	3	4	8	1	7	9	5
5	1	9	8	6	3	2	7	4
8	4	6	9	2	7	3	5	1
3	7	2	1	4	5	9	8	6
1	9	8	2	3	4	5	6	7
4	2	7	6	5	8	1	3	9
6	3	5	7	1	9	8	4	2

©2002 Kings Features Syndicate, Inc.

Difficulty: ★★★ 2/7

WONDERWORD

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the **WONDERWORD.**

CLOUDY WITH A CHANCE OF... Solution: 6 letters

B	T	E	S	I	R	N	U	S	R	E	T	N	I	W
A	A	R	F	R	E	E	Z	E	G	Z	S	P	A	M
R	L	R	O	Z	Y	S	U	N	S	E	T	T	T	A
E	L	L	O	P	S	R	I	Ⓜ	W	E	E	K	Y	U
H	A	R	E	M	I	R	O	Ⓘ	T	R	M	G	P	T
T	F	F	O	R	E	C	A	Ⓢ	T	B	O	O	H	U
A	L	E	R	T	B	T	A	Ⓣ	I	L	O	R	O	M
E	R	A	L	R	D	M	E	L	O	V	S	A	O	N
W	I	E	I	M	F	L	U	R	R	Y	D	D	N	N
N	W	G	L	O	O	M	O	T	O	R	N	A	D	O
S	H	S	H	A	Z	E	T	C	G	N	I	R	P	S
T	S	T	R	A	T	U	S	S	H	O	W	E	R	A
T	C	I	D	E	R	P	O	C	L	I	M	A	T	E
R	E	M	M	U	S	E	R	U	T	S	I	O	M	S
G	O	M	S	N	O	W	F	L	A	K	E	M	I	T

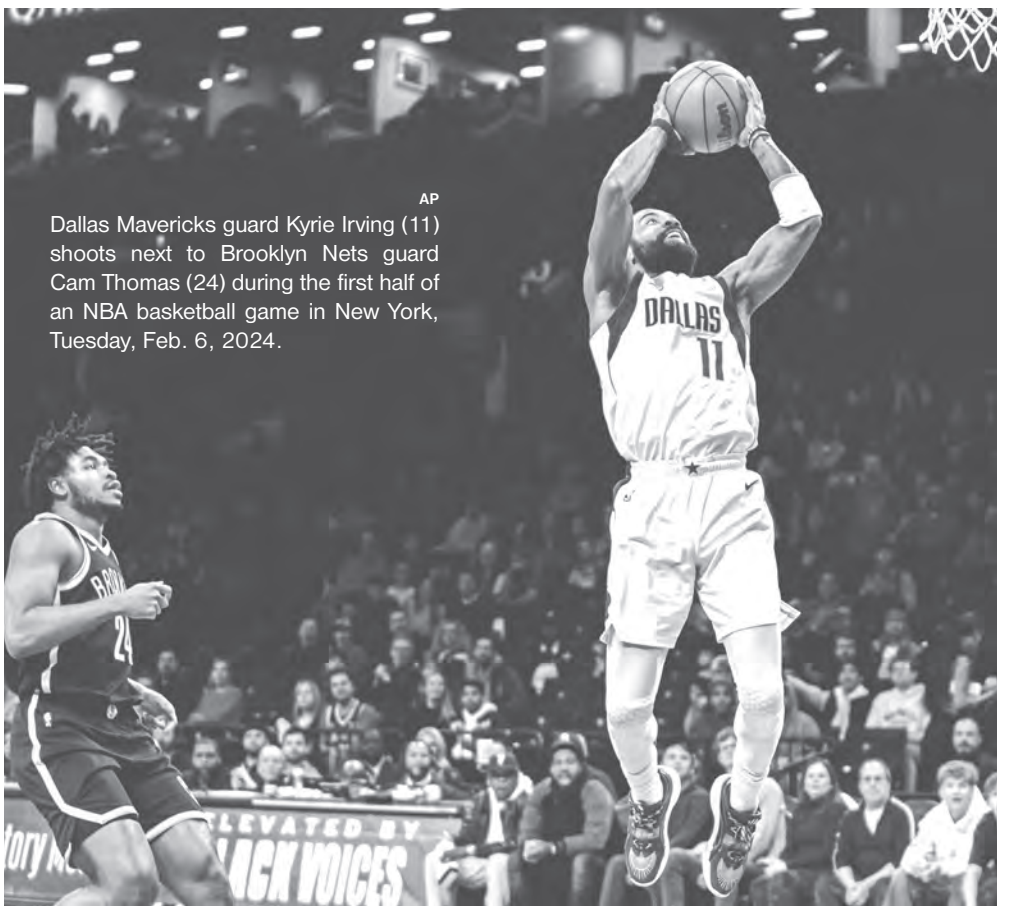
© 2024 Andrews McMeel Syndication www.wonderword.com 2/8

Advisory, Alert, Autumn, Barometer, Breeze, Bright, Climate, Cold, Fall, Flurry, Forecast, Freeze, Frost, Frozen, Gloom, Haze, Maps, Meteorology, Mist, Moisture, Moon, Predict, Radar, Rain, Season, Shower, Smog, Snowflake, Spring, Stratus, Summer, Sunrise, Sunset, Sweltering, Time, Tornado, Tropical, Typhoon, Umbrella, Water, Weather, Week, Winds, Winter

Yesterday's Answer: Scenic

The NEW **Treasury 57** can be purchased online at www.WonderWordBooks.com, or call 1-800-642-6480. (In Canada, call 1-855-232-2367)

Irving teams with Doncic to lead Mavs past Nets



AP

Dallas Mavericks guard Kyrie Irving (11) shoots next to Brooklyn Nets guard Cam Thomas (24) during the first half of an NBA basketball game in New York, Tuesday, Feb. 6, 2024.

NEW YORK (AP) —Kyrie Irving was traded away a year ago, but he's never fully left New York.

Not when he grew up in the area as a Nets fan, and not when so many family and friends were in attendance when he came back Tuesday night.

He gave them quite a show.

Irving scored 36 points, leading the Mavericks to a 119-107 victory and then spending time signing autographs and greeting his old fans in the stands.

"Just like any other basketball game, but it felt like I was home tonight," Irving said.

Luka Doncic had 35 points, 18 rebounds and nine assists as the Mavericks' guard tandem took turns hitting some deep 3-pointers in the second half when the Nets were trying to make a run. Doncic quickly shed the mask he began the game with to protect a nasal contusion and just missed his 10th triple-double of the season.

Irving was booed when he touched the ball in the early going, though he turned those to cheers after finishing one of his fancy drives for a reserve layup or hitting one of his six 3-pointers—and especially when when he rose high to slam down a lob pass in the third quarter.

"That was amazing. That was impressive," Doncic said of the play that Irving said he called for himself, telling Josh Green he could get up to catch the pass.

Irving, who is second to Vince Carter in Nets franchise history with his 14 40-point games, nearly got one against Brooklyn after returning from a six-game absence with a sprained right thumb for Monday's victory at Philadelphia.

Mikal Bridges scored 28 points and Royce O'Neal had 18 for the short-handed Nets, who trimmed a 23-point deficit to 107-101 with about five minutes remaining before Irving knocked down two straight 3-pointers for a 113-101 lead.

"It's tough. Ky has the extreme ability to shot-make versus anyone and I thought he had some timely buckets for that group," Nets coach Jacque Vaughn said.

Brooklyn's Ben Simmons had nine points, nine rebounds and seven assists after sitting out a loss to Golden State on Monday.

Mavericks coach Jason Kidd said Irving has been a calming presence for the young Dallas players, though calm certainly wasn't the word to define his time in Brooklyn. He played in just 143 games in his 3 1/2 seasons, missing time during one season after taking a leave of absence, nearly all the home games another season because of his refusal to get vaccinated against against COVID-19 as mandated in New York City, and then getting suspended by the team last season when he refused to apologize for posting a link to an antisemitic work on social media.

The relationship with the team deteriorated to the point that Irving wanted the homecoming to be over by the middle of last season. The Nets, who had already passed on giving him a contract extension the previous summer, then traded away Kevin Durant days after moving Irving, ending an era that had so much promise when the All-Stars came together in 2019.

There was no tribute video, which Durant received when he returned for the first time last week. Rather, the Nets showed photos of Irving, Seth Curry and Markieff Morris on the overhead videoboard, welcoming the three former Nets back to Brooklyn before starting lineups were announced.

Dallas led 31-24 after one quarter, before Irving made his first four shots, including two 3-pointers, for 10 points in the second as the lead quickly reached double digits. The Mavs took a 65-47 lead to the break.

The Mavericks then scored the first five of the second half, with Vaughn taking a timeout just 46 seconds after play began when his players allowed Irving a wide-open 3-pointer that made it 70-47.

The Nets had it down to nine late in the third quarter, but Doncic hit consecutive 3s listed at 30 and 36 feet, and Dallas had it back up to 95-77 after three.

KNICKS 123, GRIZZLIES 113

NEW YORK (AP)—Jalen Brunson had 27 points and eight assists before exiting with an apparent ankle injury, Donte DiVincenzo had 32 points, and New York beat short-handed Memphis.

Isaiah Hartenstein had 17 points and eight rebounds and Precious Achiuwa scored 17 as the Knicks shot 55.8% and won for the 10th time in their past 11 games, improving to 16-3 over their last 19.

Vince Williams Jr. scored 19 points for Memphis.

Brunson appeared to injure his ankle when he was fouled by G.G. Jackson in the fourth quarter.

HEAT 121, MAGIC 95

MIAMI (AP)—Jimmy Butler scored 23 points to lead seven Miami players in double figures, and the Heat beat Orlando.

Butler also had eight rebounds, eight assists and three steals for the Heat, who won for just the second time in their last seven home games. Terry Rozier scored 18 while Tyler Herro and All-Star Bam Adebayo each scored 14 for Miami, which won the season series against Orlando 3-1.

All-Star forward Paolo Banchero scored 23 points for Orlando, the 18th consecutive road game in which he's scored at least 20 — tying Tracy McGrady for the second-longest such streak in Magic history.

PACERS 132, ROCKETS 129

INDIANAPOLIS (AP)—Pascal Siakam scored 29 points and teamed up with T.J. McConnell to spur a third-quarter comeback as Indiana beat Houston.

The Rockets led 85-75 early in the third, but the Pacers allowed just 14 points the rest of the period.

McConnell had 17 points and four assists as the Pacers won for the second time in three days. They've won nine straight in the series.

Jalen Green had 30 points to lead the Rockets, who have lost two straight. Dillon Brooks added 23 points and rookie Amen Thompson finished with 13 points, 13 rebounds and six assists.

76ers center Joel Embiid has no timetable to return following knee surgery

AP

Philadelphia 76ers center Joel Embiid (21) looks to pass around Golden State Warriors forward Draymond Green (23) during the second half of an NBA basketball game, Tuesday, Jan. 30, 2024, in San Francisco.

PHILADELPHIA (AP)—Joel Embiid is out at least four weeks—presumably much, much longer—following surgery Tuesday to address an injury to the lateral meniscus in his left knee.

Embiid's bid at a second straight NBA MVP is over. The Philadelphia 76ers can only hope any shot they have at a deep postseason run hasn't been derailed, as well.

The 76ers' outlook is bleak.

Only two weeks after Embiid scored a franchise-best 70 points, he is expected to miss significant time because of the knee injury believed to have been suffered in a hard fall last week at Golden State. The 76ers did not release any kind of timetable Tuesday on Embiid's return, saying only that the two-time NBA scoring champion—and still this season's leader at 35.3 points—will be evaluated in four weeks.

Embiid was hurt after Golden State's Jonathan Kuminga fell on the 7-footer's left leg.

That game marked Embiid's return to action after an issue with his left knee prevented him from playing in a Jan. 27 game at Denver—scrapping a highly anticipated matchup with two-time MVP Nikola Jokic.

Under coach Nick Nurse, in his first season, the 76ers were again pegged as an Eastern Conference contender. But without Embiid in the lineup, the 76ers are an ugly 4-11—and have Stephen Curry and the Warriors in town Wednesday night.

"No one wants to see him get hurt, or have to push it," Curry said Tuesday. "It's kind of a freak injury, too."

The 76ers have dropped six of seven overall.

Embiid has an injury history that stretches to the day they drafted him with the No. 3 pick in 2014. He missed his entire rookie season after having surgery to repair a stress fracture in his foot in June 2014. He needed a second injury on his right foot in 2015 and missed his second season, too. Embiid has been riddled with injuries ever since on most parts of his body and has never played more than 68 games in a season; he played just 66 a year ago in his first MVP award.

The NBA added and tweaked some policies this season with hopes of getting players to appear in more games and take fewer nights off to rest. Part of the enticement to play more was adding a rule where players, in most cases, need to be in 65 games so they can be eligible for postseason award voting.

The league just didn't like the look of star players resting, especially in nationally televised games.

Embiid, who turns 30 next month, had said he would not force himself to play to meet the MVP games requirement.

"I've already done it," Embiid said in early January. "If I have a chance to get a second one, I'll do it. I'm not going to force myself or push for it. My game is always going to speak for itself. We're winning. That's the main thing. We've got to keep winning and you put in the stats to be in the (MVP) conversation that's great, too. But at the end of the day, if there's something going on, and I can't meet the requirement for the amount of games played to qualify for that, then so be it."

Embiid, though, took some serious heat when he sat out against Jocik and the Nuggets. The Sixers had scratched Embiid only minutes before tipoff after he had discomfort in his balky left knee during warmups. Philadelphia was fined $75,000 by the NBA for failing to list Embiid on the injury report.

The question that only Embiid can only answer is, did he force himself to play through injury, no matter the reason?

Curry, a two-time MVP and four-time NBA champion with the Warriors, said he "absolutely" would have played with an injury to meet the 65-game mark.

"But that's also the trust of the medical staff to save you from yourself at times," Curry said. "I would definitely push it. I'm always trying to petition to come back sooner than I probably should."

The 65-game rule (it can be less in limited cases) is part of the new collective bargaining agreement that went into effect last summer and determines whether players are eligible for things such as the MVP award, an All-NBA Team, Defensive Player of the Year, an All-Defensive Team or Most Improved Player.

"I understand why it was implemented," Curry said after practice at the Palestra. "I don't think it was necessarily right for all the awards; for it to be that black and white kind of blanket over all (the) NBA. That affects people's money, too. MVP, you can talk me into. That's being a part of the definition of what an MVP is, availability. I think for a lot of guys who have been in positions where you're playing for championships and you're trying to lead a team to that level, and the individual accolades that come with it, you're always trying to play."

The best the 76ers can do is hope to tread water in the East standings and not fall into the play-in tournament. The NBA trade deadline is Thursday. What the 76ers do—if anything—could depend on how they really feel about Embiid's chances of being healthy for the postseason when it starts in mid-April.

Chiefs will likely be short-handed when they play 49ers in the Super Bowl

HENDERSON, Nev. (AP)—The Kansas City Chiefs could be without three key players when they play the San Francisco 49ers in Sunday's Super Bowl.

Wide receiver Kadarius Toney appeared to get into a dispute with Chiefs management about a hip injury that sidelined him for six games, going on Instagram to say he didn't receive the proper injury designation for the AFC championship game at Baltimore on Jan. 28.

But he told NFL Network on Monday that his expletive-filled rant was aimed at a New York Giants fan and not the Chiefs and called his outburst a mistake.

Chiefs coach Andy Reid didn't commit Tuesday to playing Toney, opening the way for a potential healthy scratch.

"We'll see how that goes," Reid said. "He's been practicing, and we'll see whether he's up or not."

Also, Reid wasn't optimistic running back Jerick McKinnon or guard Joe Thuney would play.

McKinnon has been on injured reserve since Dec. 24 with a groin injury and hasn't practiced.

"It's slim for him to be out there," Reid said.

Thuney didn't play against the Ravens because of a pectoral injury.

"It's strength and making sure that he's in a position that he doesn't get hurt worse than what he's got," Reid said. "We'll see (whether Thuney practices). I think it's a long shot."

AP

Kansas City Chiefs wide receiver Kadarius Toney passes the ball during the team's NFL football practice Friday, Feb. 2, 2024 in Kansas City, Mo. The Chiefs will play the San Francisco 49ers in Super Bowl 58.

GOING ALL OUT

49ers defensive coordinator Steve Wilks called out his unit last week for not playing hard on every play of their 34-31 victory over the Detroit Lions in the NFC championship game.

Safety Tashaun Gipson agreed.

"That's something that never needs to be coached," Gipson said. "That's something that never needs to be addressed. This is the National Football League. You're here on the biggest stage. Those plays are unacceptable. Led to two touchdowns.

"That film (session) was hard. Obviously, you had to see that. You had to hear some choice words. But that's not our brand of football. We're a lot better football team than that, so it's not something I'm worried about moving forward."

San Francisco coach Kyle Shanahan said lack of effort was an issue, but there were other problems the Niners had in trying to stop Detroit's running attack in the first half. The Lions rushed for 148 yards in the first 30 minutes, but only 34 after that.

"When you play an eight-man front, it just takes one guy to out of the gap for there to be only one (defender) left," Shanahan said. "That's stuff we've got to do a lot better at."

EXPANDING CHIEFS FAN BASE

Chiefs owner Clark Hunt was at a function about a week ago when a woman in her mid-20s approached him. She explained that she was never a football fan, even though everyone else in her family was a Dallas Cowboys diehard, but that as a devoted Swiftie, she keenly followed pop superstar Taylor Swift's every move.

Naturally, that means she now keenly follows the Chiefs.

Ever since the 14-time Grammy-winning songstress began dating Chiefs tight end Travis Kelce last year, the franchise has seen a noticeable growth among fans in what Hunt called "that young female demographic." They are driving up TV ratings for games, buying merchandise and apparel by the truckload, and throwing their lot into a team some of them knew nothing about.

"There's no doubt that her being a fan has put more intense focus on the team than we would have had otherwise, and has opened up the fanbase to a whole new demographic that we really didn't have," Hunt told a small group of reporters on Tuesday.

"Having Taylor as a Chiefs fan is very unique," Hunt added. "I don't ever do an interview without someone asking me about it. I frequently have dads come up to me and say, 'My 10-to-12-year-old daughters never used to watch football, but now they tell me any time the Chiefs are playing to tell them, so they can come and watch.'"

All those Swifties will no doubt be watching the Super Bowl. Swift is expected to make a mad dash from Tokyo, where she will be performing on her Eras Tour the previous night, across the Pacific so that she can arrive in Las Vegas in time for kickoff.

MORE FEMALE STAR POWER

Iowa's Caitlin Clark, the reigning women's college basketball player of the year, continues to sell out arenas at home and on the road as she chases the NCAA Division I scoring record.

Her brother was the backup quarterback at rival Iowa State to 49ers second-year starter Brock Purdy. Blake Clark will be the best man in Purdy's upcoming wedding.

"Caitlin, I wasn't around as much, but obviously just through Blake, we'd always watch her," Purdy said. "What a baller she was from day one. Obviously, even high school. We knew that she was going to be a game changer. To see her now, just absolutely killing it, couldn't be happier for her."

Clark is 66 points from breaking the NCAA record of 3,527 held by former Washington star and current Las Vegas Aces All-Star Kelsey Plum.

Bucs offensive coordinator Liam Coen is excited to potentially work with Mayfield

TAMPA, Fla. (AP)—Liam Coen says leaving Kentucky to become offensive coordinator for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers and potentially work with Baker Mayfield again was a "no-brainer."

Coen was formally introduced as the newest member of the Bucs coaching staff on Tuesday, a move that could enhance the team's chances of re-signing Mayfield.

'Baker is an igniter, and that's the type of guy you want to be around," said Coen, who was the offensive coordinator of the Rams when the 2018 No. 1 overall pick played with Los Angeles for five games late in the 2022 season.

"He came into our organization at a difficult time, a time we weren't having a lot of fun. He came in and made football fun for a lot of people at that time... It was a tough year. The opportunity to be around him potentially every day, to coach a guy that's as competitive as he is, that has that moxie, I mean, that's fun," Coen added.

Mayfield, playing with his fourth team in less than two years, revived his career by leading the Bucs to the NFC South title and a wild-card playoff win over the Philadelphia Eagles this season.

The 28-year-old quarterback will be a free agent in March and has expressed an interest in staying with Tampa Bay. He spoke favorably of Coen at the Pro Bowl Games before news of the hiring broke last weekend.

Coen was the Rams' offensive coordinator two years ago, however he did not call plays. He left for Kentucky in 2023 for an opportunity to develop his play-calling skills with the Wildcats in the Southeastern Conference.

AP

New Tampa Bay Buccaneers offensive coordinator Liam Coen speaks to the media during an NFL football news conference Tuesday, Feb. 6, 2024, in Tampa, Fla. Coen was previously at the University of Kentucky and the Los Angeles Rams.

Chargers GM excited about partnership with coach Harbaugh

COSTA MESA, Calif. (AP)—Joe Hortiz is happy to partner with Jim Harbaugh to form what Los Angeles Chargers fans are hoping will be a dynamic duo. However, the Bolts' new general manager has his limits.

"Before I got the interview here, we talked about Batman and Robin, and certainly that's the way we're going to operate. The only thing is, I'm not wearing tights. I may put a cape on, but I'm not wearing tights," Hortiz said during his introductory news conference on Tuesday.

Hortiz comes to Los Angeles after spending his entire 26-year NFL career with the Baltimore Ravens, working his way up from area scout to director of player personnel.

Hortiz accepted the job on Jan. 29, the day after the Ravens lost to the Kansas City Chiefs in the AFC championship game. Hortiz has known Harbaugh for 26 years, dating to when Harbaugh was a quarterback for the Ravens.

Their relationship grew over the years as Hortiz did plenty of scouting at Stanford and Michigan.

Chargers director of football operations John Spanos said the team's approach in hiring a general manager and coach was different from 2013, when the plan was to hire the GM first.

Hortiz replaces Tom Telesco, who was fired along with coach Brandon Staley on Dec. 15 after a 63-21 loss at Las Vegas. The Chargers made the playoffs three times during Telesco's tenure but had a 86-98 record and didn't win a division title.

Spanos said the team conducted separate searches that led to Harbaugh and Hortiz.

"What was really important to us was the fit between the head coach and the general manager. We did not want to have an arranged marriage in any way. It was important to us, whatever domino did fall first, that person, we would want their insight on the other spot as well," Spanos said. "What kind of worked out perfectly was both coach Harbaugh and Joe said nothing but super positive things about each other. We felt really good about that fit."

Harbaugh, who attended Tuesday's news conference along with owner Dean Spanos, said last Thursday that he feels like he has a true partner in Hortiz.

"Not only does he know the talent that across the league and in college football and on our team, but when you listen to him talk, he knows it cold," Harbaugh said. "There's a tremendous track record there. I know that, for sure, because of my brother, John (Baltimore's coach since 2008). I trust a lot of people in football, I really do, and their opinions and their recommendations. When my brother says somebody's good, and, 'You and Joe are going to get along great and you're going to be a great team,' I know it's going to be good and it's going to be dynamic."

AP

Los Angeles Chargers general manager Joe Hortiz answers questions during his introductory news conference, Tuesday, Feb. 6, 2024 at the Chargers Hoag Performance Center in Costa Mesa, Calif. Hortiz comes to the Chargers after 26 years with the Baltimore Ravens, recently as the director of player personnel.

NMIFA continues capacity building for referees and coaches

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Northern Mariana Islands Football Association hosted the Basic Referee Course Spring 2024 and Grassroots Kids Leader Course at the NMI Soccer Training Center as part of its continued efforts to build local capacity in officiating and coaching.

The Basic Referee Course Spring 2024 took place last Jan. 26 and 27 with 27 individuals completing the workshop that offered both theoretical and practical sessions to participants. The course was very timely as the NMIFA will be kicking off three various leagues for the spring season—the TakeCare Youth Soccer League, the Dove Women's Spring League, and the Marianas Soccer League.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Participants and instructors of the NMIFA Basic Referee Course pose for a group photo during the conclusion of the workshop last month at the training room of the NMI Soccer Training Center in Koblerville.

Six NMIFA member clubs were represented at the workshop, which was conducted by NMIFA referees Ruselle Zapanta, Davy Laxa, and Mae Ito. Kanoa FC was represented by Aiden Wesley, Akoni Matsumoto, David Xing, Eamon Tang, Ed Calvo, and Rooney Gil, while Latte FC had Ann Than, Emerson Brillo, Jonne Navarro, Julio Monserat, Juvie Taitano, Rafael De Belen, and Terell Hix. Paire sent Christian Newman, Euanne Claveria, Julia Dalusung, Kyle Kramer, Mariana Tababa, Martha Culp, and William Sosa. Matansa had a pair in Arif Khan and Prince Espiritu, while MP United also sent two representatives—Irene Park and Megan Elayda—and Ho Jin Woo attended for Shirley's. Completing the course participants list were Amzad Khan of Bangladesh FC and Jose Canoy of Saipan Southern High School. Upon completion of the course, all participants received certificates.

The Grassroots Kids Leader Course also drew more than 20 participants. This is part of the NMIFA's grassroots program that is tailored for children in the U6 age group. It is a four-part course and had its kickoff last Feb. 3 with the first session focused on introduction to soccer, protection of the children, application of basic first aid and nutrition, and small sides games and preparations.

The second part of the course is scheduled this Friday, Feb. 9, with participants learning and practicing drills for U6 Grassroots Festival. The festival type of event in soccer focuses mainly on basic skills in the sport and making drills more fun for young players to enjoy. The third leg is slated for Feb. 17, while the date of the course's last session will be announced later.

NMIFA interim technical director Konomi Suzuki said referees and coaches play critical roles in the continued development of NMI soccer so courses like these are important to equip them with a great deal of knowledge and technical expertise in refereeing and coaching. She added that growing the pool of referees and coaches will help the NMIFA run its various programs and develop and train more players.

NMIFA general secretary Ross Zapanta said they will continue to train referees and coaches to open career pathways and other opportunities for these individuals. In the past, referees from the NMI officiated games in off-island tournaments. Some referees and coaches have also been included in the interscholastic program that the CNMI Public School System's Athletic Department runs in partnership with the NMIFA. ***(PR)***

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

MP United FC and Matansa FC representatives discuss one of the topics presented during the NMIFA Grassroots Kids Leaders Course last Saturday at the NMI Soccer Training Center in Koblerville.

MAN

From page 20

and Dela Cruz finished it off with a grand slam in his first at-bat that inning, and in the next round up the lineup, hit a 3-run home run.

Tuturamz came up with a measly three runs in the third from homers by Eric Cabrera and Jack Cepeda, but they could not come back from the big gap that Man Amigos had built.

Pete Sablan added two more homers for Man Amigos, with Dela Cruz scoring the last run in the last inning.

Asahi 16, Wazzup 2

Asahi won another shortened game as they silenced Wazzup, 16-2.

Asahi's John Taitano started off their offense with a three-run jack in the first. Wazzup tied it in the second and took the lead in the third as Asahi was shut down in order by their pitcher.

However, Asahi woke up from their drunken stupor and scored eight runs to overtake the lead by nine runs, 11-2.

Wazzup went scoreless in the fourth and fifth and Asahi took it all the way home with a final blow of five more runs in the last inning.

Sufa 16, Team Redmen 3

Sufa didn't give a chance to the Redmen as they won in another shortened game, 16-3.

The only runs for the Redmen came in the third inning by way of Jason Reyes, Rick Bauer, and Tom Pangelinan, while Sufa were on a run-scoring frenzy throughout the game.

Audie Maratita hit a 3-run homer in the second and at the end of the inning, led 8-0. He hit another homer in the last inning after seven more runs came in the third and fourth, and the Redmen conceded when their offense remained lifeless.

Hagu La'mun 20, Saipal 10

Hagu La'mun doubled Saipal's score, 20-10, in a run-hungry game.

Hagu La'mun had the upper hand majority of the time, but Saipal put up a good fight until the end. It was a scrappy game with no home runs, both teams relying on base hits and defensive mistakes, but Hagu La'mun just had momentum on their side as they made contact more often than Saipal.

By the fourth inning, Hagu La'mun had a 14-8 lead, which only grew wider as Saipal went scoreless in the fifth. Hagu La'mun went on to add four more runs while Saipal could only score two.

LEIGH GASES

Man Amigos' Joey Dela Cruz hit a grand slam and another three-run homer in the same inning of their game against Tuturamz in the 2024 Budweiser Belau Amateur Softball Association men's division last Sunday at the Dandan Softball Field.

Peliliu 9, Tokahao 6

This game could've gone both ways, but Peliliu came out on top to win, 9-6 against Tokahao.

Tokahao had a 2-1 lead in the third inning, but couldn't hold on as Peliliu added two on the board to switch the momentum. Pelilu went on to add three more runs from Cartfield Sablan's 3-run homer in the fifth, while Tokahao scored two in the sixth for a 6-4 game.

Peliliu added three more in the sixth and Tokahao failed to make a comeback in their last at-bat as they scored just two more runs.

Results of the women's division will be posted in the next issues of *Saipan Tribune*.

ACS

From page 20

at four points; Grace Christian Academy 2 has one point; and SSHS 2 is scoreless.

ACS 2 is made up of Jessica Chen, Ulrica Wang, Esther Zhao, Nancy Tian, Aaron Zheng, Louis Chen, Stanley Zhang, and Caleb Cui.

In Bracket 2, MHS 2 is in the lead with nine points as they swept Kagman High School in all five events for five points, and gathered four points from Saipan International School 2.

A close second is SSHS 1 with eight points; SIS 2 has two points; ACS 1 has one; and KHS 2 is scoreless.

MHS 2 consists of Isa Nishitani, Nichole Llaga, Emma Quan, Genelyn Lansangan, Darren Tabora, Jan Dumagan, Justin Gragasin, and Elijah Umali.

MHS 3 is on top of Bracket 3 with eight points after they claimed five points from Dr. Rita H. Inos High School, and three points from Grace Christian Academy 1.

GCA 1 is in second place at five points; KHS 1 has four points; SIS 1 has two points; and Dr. Rita H. Inos High School has one point.

MHS 3 includes Tara Islam, Angela Maratas, Angieleysha Punzalan, Zannobi Naomi, John Paul Delos Reyes, Benedict Martinez, and John Casauran.

SIS

From page 20

to start the season.

Back-and-forth action saw the lead sway from either teams, with MHS on top, 3-2 at the end of the first half. The momentum shifted and KHS found their groove as they pressured MHS' defense on every corner.

Pia Ngewakl took matters into her own hands as she scored all of KHS' goals, and scored the last goal of the game in the 48th minute to tie it up, much to the dismay of the Lady Dolphins.

MHS had a 5-4 lead in the 46th minute, but slipped up a couple minutes later and allowed Ngewakl to score the tying goal. Both teams desperately scrambled to shoot at least one more goal to steal the victory, but failed to do so and settled for a draw.

MHS' Tamia Kileleman-Hix and Rizza Relucio scored two goals each, while Raven Anderson scored the fifth goal.

Irving teams with Doncic to lead Mavs past Nets.

PAGE 17

Saipan Tribune
Sports

Chiefs will likely be short-handed when they play 49ers in the Super Bowl.

PAGE 18

Man Amigos thrashes Tuturamz, 19-5

LEIGH GASES

Man Amigos pose for a group photo after their win against Tuturamz in the 2024 Budweiser Belau Amateur Softball Association men's division last Sunday at the Dandan Softball Field.

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Man Amigos killed it against Tuturamz to win, 19-5, in the 2024 Budweiser Belau Amateur Softball Association men's division last Sunday at the Dandan Softball Field.

It was a run-mercy ruled game that ended in the fifth inning because Tuturamz couldn't get anything on the board after the third inning.

Man Amigos drew first blood by scoring in the first inning, with the game quickly evened up in the second from a two-RBI homer by Hank Reyes.

The third inning was a fruitful one for Man Amigos after coming out scoreless in the second. They scored 14 runs with a couple of homers from cleanup hitter Joey Dela Cruz. The top three in the lineup did their jobs by getting on base,

See MAN on Page 19

SIS rocks HS girls soccer start; MHS, KHS draw

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Saipan International School Lady Geckos rocked the pitch at the start of the NMIFA-PSS Girls High School Interscholastic Soccer League as they won against Saipan Southern High School Lady Mantas, 8-2, last Tuesday at the NMI Soccer Training Center in Koblerville.

Meanwhile, Marianas High School Lady Dolphins and Kagman High School Lady Ayuyus ended in a 5-5 draw.

The Lady Geckos dominated Lady Mantas from the get-go, with more push and attacks toward their goal. SSHS strikers were almost always defended tightly so that they could not get clear shots—either their attempts were too wide, or they were blocked at the last second.

LEIGH GASES

Saipan International School defenders put the pressure on Saipan Southern High School as they try to make a push toward SIS' goal in the season opener of the NMIFA-PSS Girls High School Interscholastic Soccer League at the NMI Soccer Training Center in Koblerville last Tuesday.

Rosie Saralu broke the ice first as she landed the first goal of the game in the first minute, but the Lady Geckos quickly replied with multiple goals within a span of 20 minutes.

By the 20th minute, SIS led, 4-1, as goals were made by Irin Chung, Kaithlyn Chavez, and Audrey Castro. More attempts were made by Saralu at SIS' goal, but to no avail, while SIS's firing squad kept busy.

Chavez went on to complete the hat-trick in the 35th minute, then added one more for good measure. Audrey Castro made it 7-1 in the 45th minute before Saralu scored SSHS' second goal of the game two minutes later.

SIS didn't let up and Serin Chung scored one more goal in the 49th minute to win by six goals, 8-2.

The defending champions, Lady Dolphins, had a tougher time against the Lady Ayuyus as both teams hit the ground running at full speed

See SIS on Page 19

ACS 2, MHS lead brackets in HS badminton

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Agape Christian School Torchbearers team 2 and Marianas High School Dolphins led their respective brackets in the season opener of the NMBA-PSS Co-ed High School Interscholastic Badminton League 2023-2024 last Saturday at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

ACS 2 led Bracket 1 with a perfect 10 points after slaying Saipan Southern High School 2 in all five events—men's doubles, women's singles, men's singles, women's doubles, and mixed doubles, for five points. They swept Tinian High School as well for another five points.

MHS 1 is in second place with five points; THS is third

See ACS on Page 19

LEIGH GASES

Agape Christian School high school men's doubles badminton players in action during the season opener of the NMBA-PSS Co-ed High School Interscholastic Badminton League 2023-2024 last Saturday at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.